LIFE OF THE VENERABLE JOSEPH COTTOLENGO.

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THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE JOSEPH BENEDICT COTTOLENGO,

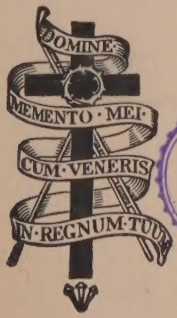
FOUNDER OF THE LITTLE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE IN TURIN.

Compiled from the Italian Life of

DON P. GASTALDI,

BY A PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

(Barchi, Ca., Of)



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PREFACE.

THE Life of the Venerable Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, Canon of the Church of Corpus Christi, in Turin, and Founder of the Little House of Providence, in the same city, has been compiled and abridged from the Italian Life written by Don Gastaldi, from documents diligently collected and critically authenticated. In its present dress, it will afford the English reader an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the labours and virtues of one of the greatest friends and benefactors of suffering humanity, to the relief of whose pains and sorrows he devoted his whole life. In the midst of poverty and sickness, of distress and grief, armed with a burning charity and spurred on by an untired zeal, he went on allaying the sufferings of the bodies with the most exquisite care, and preparing their souls for the more solid and lasting consolations which religion has in store for all those who cast themselves into her loving arms.

At the same time one cannot but admire the sterling virtues with which he prepared himself for the mission to which he felt called, and for the faithful discharge of the arduous duties connected with it, becoming, as Pius IX., of glorious memory, declared, "a new hero of Christian charity."

But there is a distinctive feature in the life of this servant of God, which is of a special interest for the Catholic reader. Cottolengo was a providential man, placed among his fellow-men with a particular mission. He will not only edify the Christian world with his deeds of charity, piety, and zeal, he will not only win the admiration of people by the splendour of his exalted virtues, he will not only spur on his readers to enter the field of benevolence for the comfort of suffering souls and the healing of sorrowing bodies, but he will lift up the minds and the hearts of all to contemplate a higher order of things, and to love, bless, and invoke that sweet and ever-active Providence which rules over the universe and provides for the needs of every man on his way through the toils of life to the rest of the eternal blessedness.

The Venerable Joseph Cottolengo has received from above the mission of proclaiming to the world the wonders of God's infinite Providence over the minutest details of our mortal existence; of

encouraging all the good and faithful to cast all their confidence in the Divine goodness; and of silencing the impious blasphemies of profane grumblers, who, after having defiled in themselves the Divine image, outraged the adorable name of God, resisted His grace, impugned His rights, denied His Christ and His Church, and asserted their own independence, gainsay any supernatural interference in the ruling of the world and the destinies of men, as if God were altogether cut off from the government of the creatures who have come forth from His hands.

Hence the characteristic trait which distinguishes the Venerable Founder of the Little House of Providence, from among the other servants of God who have laboured in the vineyard of the Church, is the mission to which he was assigned of proclaiming the indisputable rights, the wise ruling and kind dispensations of the Divine Providence over man, not so much by the sound of his voice, as by the stern reality of facts. For he was destined to erect, in one of the greatest cities of Italy, a grand monument to the glory of Providence, where every man might see with his own eyes how God is a bountiful, provident Father, Who knows all His children, Who loves them with an infinite love, Whose hands are always opened to shower down blessings and gifts on them, whenever they fall suppliant at His feet,

acknowledging their misery, and putting all their trust in Him. The Little House of Providence, with its thousands of helpless, friendless, destitute inmates, was this grand monument, which towers up to teach the world how men can win God's blessings, and how God is ever ready to grant them.

We are confident that after the perusal of these pages, the reader's heart and mind will feel refreshed and strengthened, to bless and love the good God Who deals out so tenderly and so copiously His blessings, and will proclaim the Venerable Joseph Benedict Cottolengo the true champion and apostle of Divine Providence in the nineteenth century.

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BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH AND YOUTH.

THE Venerable Servant of God, Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, was born in Bra, a small town of Piedmont, in the province of Albi, on the 3rd of May, 1786, the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross. His father, Joseph Anthony Cottolengo, though not possessed of many of the good things of this world, was yet blessed with rich spiritual gifts, and deservedly enjoyed the universal esteem of his fellow-citizens. His mother, Benedicta Clarotti of Sivigliano, was a lady of remarkable piety and purity, in whom were reflected all the virtues that should ever adorn the heart of a Christian wife and mother. Full of the most tender compassion for the poor and afflicted, she never allowed them to apply to her in vain, and the recipient of her generous alms was never dismissed without the consolation of her cheering sympathy. She was never so happy as when she had done an act of kindness to some of her neighbours. At home and abroad, in youth and womanhood, always a model of modesty and piety, she was daily present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and her attention to the Sunday sermon was

so close that, being gifted with an extraordinary memory, she could repeat it almost word for word to those who had been detained at home, not even omitting the Latin quotations. She was the happy mother of twelve children, six of whom went from the cradle to their heavenly abode. The other six, brought up under the solicitous care and virtuous examples of their pious mother, passed unscathed through the perilous years of youth, and later on became the pride and joy of their parents, as well as bright ornaments of society. Joseph, the subject of this sketch, was the eldest. Augustine, the second, became a painter of considerable merit, and, having consecrated his easel to religious subjects, he never defiled it by treating subjects offensive to decorum and modesty. Louis embraced the clerical state, received the doctor's cap in theology, and was appointed Canon and Theologian of the collegiate church of Chieri. Ignatius, the youngest, joined the Order of St. Dominic, and, under the name of Father Albert, became Rector of the parish of St. Mary di Castello in Genoa. Christina and Teresa lived unmarried under the parental roof, much beloved by their townspeople, and distinguished for their many Christian virtues.

The first year of Joseph's life was one of constant fear to the pious mother. In spite of her most affectionate care, the child was so weak and sickly that she almost despaired of rearing him, expecting every day that he might breathe his last in her arms. But fervent prayers and maternal nursing saved him. He at last became stronger,

and gave signs of improving health. His father, constantly engaged in commercial pursuits, and relying fully on the enlightened piety of his wife, left the child's education almost entirely to her care. And in so doing he did well; for a pious mother is the best teacher of piety to her child. No sooner had reason begun to dawn on the boy's mind, than the names of God, of Jesus, and of His Blessed Mother were whispered into his ears; his lips were taught to lisp little prayers, and his eyes to gaze on holy pictures. She would at times bring him to church, so that the great building, the solemn ceremonies, and the popular devotions might awaken in him sentiments of piety and religion, and root deeply in his heart the precious germs of faith. If a beggar knocked at the door in search of alms, his mother would place a coin or a loaf in his hand, saying: "The poor, my child, are our brothers, we must try to help them; run and offer him this little blessing from God." His infant heart was trained to feel kindly towards his neighbours, and piously towards God. Nor were these lessons lost. For, on returning home from church after witnessing some solemn ceremony, he would build up a mimic altar with tapers and flowers, and assisted by boys whom he called in, would go through all the ceremonies of the church service, including processions and benediction, singing, and using incense. And if he happened to see some poor persons passing by, he would immediately run to tell his mother, and gave her no peace till he had obtained something for them. On his return from a visit to

a hospital, and when but five years old, he was seen going from room to room, measuring their size with a tape, in order to ascertain the number of beds each might contain. "What do you mean, Joseph," asked his wondering mother, "by taking so many measurements?" "I should like to know, mother," he replied, "how many beds I could put in, for when I get big, I want to fill this house with as many sick people as I can."

The delicacy of his conscience, even at that age, was indeed wonderful. Once he chanced to find a copper coin on the floor. As there was no looker-on, he picked it up and thrust it into his pocket. But he soon remembered his mother's warning, "God is ever seeing you and reads your most hidden thoughts;" and "such was the remorse I felt," he used to say when a priest, referring to the deed, "that I had no peace till I had given the coin to my mother." At another time, when he was but seven, one of his aunts, Victoria Cottolengo, asked him to go with her to the wine-cellar. He went, but he showed his reluctance and displeasure by saying: "Why do you bother me? I don't want to go." Night came and he went to bed, but he could not sleep. After battling for three hours with the reproaches of his conscience, for the rude expression he had used during the day, at last he rose, and rushing into the room where the family circle were gathered, fell on his aunt's neck and begged her pardon for his unkindness. His mother, who was totally ignorant of the occurrence, asked what he meant. "Oh!" said he, "I said 'bother,' and I

could not sleep." His aunt bade him ask God's pardon and return to bed. "I have already asked God's pardon," said he, "and He has granted it. And now that you also pardon me, I shall go to sleep with a light heart."

Thus the child grew under the vigilant eye and wise training of a pious mother, obedient, pure, affectionate, dear to his friends, who called him an angel; dear to his mother, who was confident that the early virtues of her boy were an earnest of continual blessings on her home and family.

CHAPTER II.

AT SCHOOL.

God, Who had chosen Joseph Cottolengo to be a vessel of election, and to accomplish great things for His glory, was pleased to provide him with a spiritual guide in the person of Emmanuel Amerano, Prior of the parish of St. Andrew the Apostle, a priest of edifying piety, mature counsel, and apostolic zeal, a true father of the poor, a consoler of the afflicted, and an indefatigable labourer in the vineyard of our Lord. He had charge of that church and ministered to its people for fifty-three years. He was much beloved by all, and crowds flocked around the pulpit, eager to listen to the eloquence of his discourses; and every one was proud to see him at the head of the charitable institutions in the city of Bra. This zealous priest undertook to guide the first steps of Joseph in the ways of God's service, and he was so favourably impressed with the fervent piety of his pupil, his gentle temperament, and his angelic purity, that he admitted him, though but a child of nine years, to receive his first Communion. He thought that so pure a heart should without delay benefit by the treasures of grace in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. So,

after days of earnest preparation and joyous expectation, he was admitted to the Holy Table on Easter Sunday of the year 1794. On this eventful day Joseph felt soul and body brought into contact with the purity of Jesus Himself, a grace he seems to have preserved to the last, for towards the close of his life he was once heard to say to himself, in a moment of unguarded enthusiasm, "I hope I have never lost my baptismal innocence, or broken my friendship with God."

School-days now came. In compliance with his parents' wishes, though with reluctance on his part, he set his mind on books and lessons. He was at school as he had been at home; with the same relish for heavenly things, the same gentle behaviour, and the same love of retirement. Before school-hours he served Mass, and when he was dismissed from class he hurried home. Having no relish for the ordinary boyish amusements, he was always happy at home with his brothers and sisters. Though quick and of a lively disposition, he rather avoided the companionship of noisy playmates. His little altar and the mimic service held around it, were his favourite recreation. And all the while his love for the poor seemed to increase with his years. On his way to school he daily met poor old men and ragged boys, begging alms. The sight of them used to wound his heart and bring tears to his eyes. He was often heard to say: "Oh, the dear, suffering poor, how hungry and cold they are; how gladly would I help them all if it were in my power." And this was no mere passing desire. For every

piece of money that he received, and whatever he obtained by pleading for them, passed at once into their hands. Whenever he heard of some family in distress, his sympathy was at once aroused, and hastening to plead with his mother in their behalf, he would say: "Don't you know, mamma, that that woman has so many children and not enough for them to eat? Shall I take them this loaf, or this piece of meat?" Had he followed the promptings of his heart, he would have given everything away. In the morning when his breakfast, which usually consisted of bread and fruit, was laid before him, he would try to get more, pretending that he had not enough; then he would fill his pockets and satchel, for distribution to the poor, whom he might meet on his way to school, beckoning them to some out of the way place, in order to avoid notice.

Always a bright model of that charity which excites the wonder and admiration of all, he gave not less edification by his obedience, truthfulness, and delicate modesty. His love for purity was so well-known and respected, that if he chanced to join his companions when they were indulging in words or jests offensive to modesty, they would whisper to one another: "Hush, here comes Cottolengo; he won't put up with this."

But though his acquaintances looked upon him as a young saint and treated him as such, he was yet considered to be somewhat of a dunce at school. His mental capacities seemed to be poor. Despite his most strenuous efforts, he was always at the bottom of his class. Persevere and apply as he

would, he could not master his lessons. Though he assiduously devoted himself to his studies, and earnestly endeavoured to exercise his memory, he still met with little success. He felt there was a blank in his mind. "I am too dull," said he to his companions, "you understand everything at once, and I nothing at all." His little friends lent him all the assistance they could, but with no apparent improvement. The teacher, a man of stern temper and rigid discipline, who firmly believed in the free application of the rod, nevertheless spared him, well aware of his efforts and his mortification. In face of these difficulties he never lost courage, and later on having been advised by some priests to pray to St. Thomas of Aquin for aid in his troubles, he did so with great fervour, and his prayer was heard. In a short time he was at the head of his class.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY PIETY.

JOSEPH COTTOLENGO knew that a singular favour had been conferred on him. The mist that had enveloped his mind was now dissipated. But what return was he to make for such a grace? This thought absorbed him. For a time he seemed unable to find anything that would suitably mark the depth of his gratitude and please his benefactor. The worthlessness of all earthly things came home to him, but in his heart he found an offering that appeared worthy of God's acceptance. "I will strive to become a saint!" was his resolution. And he set to work.

The better to keep in mind this purpose, he placed himself in the presence of God. "God is ever present with me," said he, "and I must ever be present with Him." He engraved this thought on his heart, and, as a reminder, inscribed on his books and papers, and even on the walls of his room, the words, "God sees me." On his composition-books he often wrote, *Laus Deo*, and *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes;* or, "I wish to become a saint," "With God's help I will become a saint." Even in his old age he used to repeat, "I often say,

I wish to be a saint,' and I am still the same old inner, but with God's help I will still be a saint!" To ensure success he had recourse to the Queen of ll Saints, who gave birth to the Author of sanctity, nd who leads her children to holiness. To her he ntrusted his heart, with a prayer that she would reserve it from sin, and make it ever worthy of God. He addressed her by the endearing name of is good Mother, and when alone, he delighted to ing her Litany, or some devout canticle in her raise. In a remote corner of the house he hung a icture of the Blessed Virgin upon the wall, and he ften betook himself there so that he might feel imself near her. His happiest hour was in the vening, when, after the turmoil of the busy day, ll the members of the family gathered together to ay the Rosary. He never failed to be present. But this was not enough for his devotion. He went rom house to house among the neighbours to nduce them to join in this devotion. His way was o winning that they could not refuse. After a while is pious congregation so increased, that he found it ecessary to adopt a common signal to call them ogether. Having no bell or gong, he used to strike saucepan. During the summer months, to prevent he devout crowd from being inconvenienced by the eat of the season, from a balcony overhanging the nner courtyard, in a loud voice he would intone he Rosary, the others responding without leaving heir rooms or interrupting their work.

Joseph was very industrious in the practice of elf-mortification. His fervour chiefly mortified his

sense of taste. Whenever he could escape notice, he refrained entirely from any delicacy. Otherwise, he would divide his share among his brothers, reserving for himself the least portion. On the other hand, he freely partook of any food that was either ill-cooked, or distasteful to his palate, without the least complaint, so that his mother often remarked to his brothers, that they should take example from Joseph, who was never discontented with his food. On the eves of feasts in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he usually fasted, though of course he was not bound, on account of his age. And once, having through forgetfulness broken the fast at breakfast, he made up for it by depriving himself of his dinner. For the same reason he abstained from taking wine, even to the detriment of his health. This having been noticed, he was forbidden to continue his abstinence. He obeyed without reply, recognizing in the order of his confessor a command from the Blessed Virgin. Our Heavenly Queen, who delights in purity and innocence, and is filled with grace, that out of her abundance she may enrich her clients, lovingly rewarded Joseph's remarkable fidelity in her service by preserving unsullied his purity. He soon felt the presence of her protecting hand. Though very cautious about his associates, and of a retiring disposition, once he came across a boy of vicious habits, who had injured more than one of his companions. The result of his attempt to inveigle Joseph into his evil ways was that he turned from him in disgust, and instantly reporting him to

uperiors, the little tempter was sent away. Joseph ttributed his first victory to the timely aid of his Blessed Mother, and thanking her with all the love f his heart, determined to be even more watchful bout his purity, and more cautious in the choice of is companions.

The better to succeed in the work of his sanctiication, he had recourse to two means. First, he bandoned himself without reserve to the guidance f his spiritual Father, to whom his pure, simple, andid soul was as a clear mirror, from whom he ad no secrets, in whose wisdom he relied so ompletely that he would never undertake anything ithout his counsel and approval. And next, he equented the sacraments regularly. Every Friday e approached the tribunal of Penance, a practice e never failed to observe through his long life. As o the Blessed Eucharist, the Sacrament which ıtimately unites us with the Heart of Jesus, and nparts those noble impulses which transform men ıto angels, he at first was a fortnightly commuıcant, but he was soon allowed to partake of the read of Angels weekly, and even oftener. It must ot be supposed that the evil one left him undisırbed in these devout practices. "As I was once n my way to church, on a Communion-day," as his ographer records from his own lips, "I saw a wall ross the path before me, and I felt the grasp of a rong arm holding me so fast, that I could not ove. I was frightened, and on the point of turning ack. Don Amerano, my confessor, who was llowing me at a short distance, noticing that

something was wrong, and seeing me stand still, waved his hand, and bade me proceed. The obstacle at once vanished, and I moved forward without further difficulty."

At another time, just as he was ready to approach the altar, there rose before him a huge figure of frightful aspect, in the midst of smoke and fire. Afraid to approach, and fearing lest his soul was stained with some secret sin, he hurried back to his confessor for advice. "Be not alarmed," said he, "and preserve your peace of mind. All is well. Go to Communion, even were you to tread on devils, and walk through fire." The answer restored his confidence, and he went cheerfully to the Holy Table.

CHAPTER IV.

VOCATION.

Joseph Benedict Cottolengo was in his seventeenth year when he finished his course of rhetoric. It was time for him to choose a career. What was his vocation? What did God expect of him? The longings of his heart were towards the sanctuary. His resolution was no mystery to those who had witnessed the tenour of his life, his vivid faith, and his indifference to the world. He had recourse to God for light and counsel. He redoubled his prayers. With renewed fervour he applied to Mary, the Mother of Good Counsel, for guidance. If he entered the sanctuary, she must open its portals and guide his steps: and if he embraced the sacerdotal state, it was to her he had recourse to obtain the sublime spirit of the priesthood and the exalted virtues of a priest. The more he prayed, the stronger was the attraction he experienced. He took counsel with his confessor, Don Amerano, who was not slow to approve his design. "Go," said he, "do not mind oppositions and difficulties; God calls you. You are destined to become the father of a large family." His parents, as he was their eldest son, wished him to be married. But

their faith and piety made them yield to the will of God and the choice of their son. They respected his freedom, and they would never thrust their own interests between him and his God.

But though his parents offered no serious opposition, yet the tempter did. For, as we learn from Cottolengo himself, the evil one one night endeavoured to deter him from embracing the ecclesiastical state, assuring him that as a priest he would reap a richer harvest of souls for Hell than for Heaven. "Do not mind the old tempter," was his confessor's reply when he heard of it; "he is at his old tricks, and only makes sport of you." Thus encouraged, he prepared himself by spending some days in solitude and prayer, and renewing his resolve to become a saint. On the 5th of December, 1802, Don Amerano put on him his first cassock. With a heart full of joy and a beaming face he returned home to meet the embraces of his relatives, and his sister Teresa, on seeing him, said that he looked more like an angel than a cleric.

Times were not favourable to ecclesiastical studies. All Europe was in agitation. Amidst the troubles of the time people found scanty means and little leisure for grave studies. Many seminaries were closed, and Joseph was therefore forced to remain at home, and to study philosophy under two pious and learned priests, who had retired to Bra, having been compelled to abandon their professorships in the University of Turin. His time was now divided between study and works of piety, for it was not his intention to advance in knowledge at

e expense of sanctity. He relaxed in none of his evotional exercises. His books were his dearest easures. Frivolous and profane books he would ither read nor keep. He was seldom abroad, often one, and he was satisfied with taking an evening alk in some out of the way place. He cared only r the companionship of clerics and priests, with hom he conversed upon spiritual or scientific bjects. Though sparkling with wit and pleasantry, s words always breathed modesty and religious avity. He loved the retirement of home, and never ok part in noisy amusements or popular recreations. e even closed a window in his room, lest he might e tempted to look on the piazza beneath, and so be stracted by the amusements of the crowd. At me his conduct was full of gravity and reserve. e took what was given to him for his clothing ithout remark, and as to his food, no one could ll what he liked or disliked. To speak to him of e temporal affairs of the family was but time lost, r he always answered that he neither knew nor red to know anything about such concerns. etween him and his brothers and sisters there isted a mutual and extreme affection, but he frained from taking part in any of their sports. at times he took a walk with them, he entertained em with pious stories from Holy Scripture, and fore returning home he would visit with them me shrine of the Blessed Virgin, or the altar of e Blessed Sacrament. He never failed to take rt in the evening devotions, and if he knew that y of them had offended God during the day, he

would manage to find them alone, and with very gentle admonitions, make them aware of their fault. Such was the tenour of his life at that age, and all who chanced to see him held him in the highest respect. Don Ferrero, the Rector of the collegiate church, who was his master, used to say, "Joseph Cottolengo is an angel, a true blessing for his family, and a perfect model for his companions."

CHAPTER V.

HIS WORKS OF CHARITY.

His progress in study kept pace with his advance in piety. His mind was always fixed on his sanctification, which he had firmly determined to advance. He entertained the most exalted idea of the priestly character in all its relations to God and His Church, and his will was to devote himself without reserve to the discharge of all the duties connected with the holy ministry. The poor, whom he had been taught to love so tenderly, and in whom he ever saw, with the liveliest faith, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, were before him, and he was as devoted to them now as in his younger days. He made their sufferings and distress his own, and whatever money came into his possession was dropped into their hands, ever glad when he could give, and sad when his charitable supplies were exhausted. He never reckoned what he gave away,

but often thought what he would give if it were in his power. A saying of his was, "Not only the left hand must not know what the right is doing, but not even the right hand what it itself has done." He often went in quest of poor families, and procured relief for them. He never pleaded in vain in their favour with his mother, who generously responded to all his calls, and he gladly employed as a channel for his almsgiving the hands of his sister Teresa, or his cousin Louis. He cared not for wealth for himself, but wished to have plenty that he might assist the poor. One year, when the harvest promised to be unusually abundant, he remarked, "How glad I am that the crop is so good. The poor will feast, for their share must be larger. The more God is liberal towards us, the more we must be liberal towards the needy. God gives to us that we may give to them. He is the fountain and we the channels. If our channels are narrow and small, small also will be the supply from the fountain." He often mentioned some of the members of his family, particularly his grandfather and grandmother, whose memory was held in benediction among the poor for their charity to them; and this in order to keep alive among the living members of the family the spirit of Christian charity. "We must be kind and merciful towards the poor," said he, "for they are the representatives of Jesus, and He esteems them as the apple of His eye. We win the love of Jesus for ourselves when we show love to His poor. And besides, are we not all miserable beggars at the feet of God?"

The works of spiritual charity were not overlooked. Every day in Lent, and every Sunday of the year, he taught the catechism to poor children. This ministry is not one naturally pleasing, nor is it easy. Our cleric had learnt the art of endearing himself to the young. His graceful address, his winning manners, his patient indulgence, won their hearts. His class was the largest in number, and the most orderly in behaviour. All the little ones were glad to listen to the stories from Scripture, or the lives of saints, with which he interspersed his lessons. His zeal extended to all, and in particular to those boys who, more advanced in age and dull of mind, lagged behind the rest in their knowledge of the catechism, and felt ashamed to mix with the younger children. These he collected at home, and by patient industry and encouragement, prepared them for a worthy reception of the sacraments.

Whilst so engaged, he did not lose sight of himself and of his spiritual progress. For he was well aware that a battle was raging in his heart, and a victory was to be won. He was by nature of a sanguine temperament, with quick impulses, and prone to anger. These defects he strove to overcome with all his might, and so well did he succeed that, as is related by his friend and companion, Francis Tarnavasio, after he had taken the clerical habit, he never fell into a fit of anger, and always appeared serene and cheerful, even in the midst of severe trials and painful occurrences. At this period, in addition to the fasts he usually observed on Wednesdays, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he

also added one on Saturdays, and this with such good effect upon the other members of his family, that all of them, moved by his example, and wishing to pay a little homage to the Blessed Mother, on every Saturday observed a Lenten abstinence, partaking only of bread and a few dried fruits.

But now severe trials came to disturb the peaceful tenour of Joseph's life, and these, while trying his mettle, were to test the strength of his vocation. Piedmont, the land of the brave, so loyal to its kings and so faithful to the Church, had lost its independence. It was under French rule. And France, led by an ambitious and unscrupulous warrior, was at war with all Europe. There was a continuous call for soldiers to swell the ranks of Napoleon's armies, and in the year 1805, Joseph Cottolengo was summoned to enrol himself under the detested banner. He could not escape. His friends and family were alarmed. The idea of a separation was intolerable. At any cost or sacrifice, his family desired to obtain for him exemption from conscription. They proposed that he should marry, and thus exempt himself from that law of servitude and blood. But it was left to Don Amerano to decide. Joseph remained calm and confident; he trusted in Divine Providence. If called to follow the banner of Jesus Christ in the sacred ministry, God would not allow him to be dragged under the flag of France. Amerano, to whose wise counsels recourse was had, spoke: "The married state is not for Joseph. To think of it is preposterous. God calls him to a holier paternity: to be the

Father of a holy and more numerous family. Heaven will come to his rescue." And rescue came. For when a paid substitute had been secured and accepted by the military commissioners, the Bishop of Asti, Mgr. Gattinara, to whose episcopal see Bra had been attached by the usurpers, interposed, and obtained his freedom from military service.

The intervention of Divine Providence was manifest. There was joy in every heart, and particularly in the heart of Joseph, who almost at the same time received notice from his Bishop that the Seminary was open to him, and that he would be welcomed with open arms. His fame had preceded him. The seminarians and their professors were not disappointed in their expectation. For, grateful for the favour he had received, and yearning after his sanctification, he renewed his old purposes with fresh vigour. In the Seminary, which he considered as the threshold of the sanctuary, he won the esteem of his professors by his solid piety, his industrious application, his reverence for authority; and endeared himself to his fellow-students by his cordial, gracious, modest manners, always ready to oblige every one, and to contribute to their comforts and cheerfulness; offering to all his kind services, and cheering all with his witty conversation, the least of all in his own esteem, but the foremost in theirs. It was remarked that amidst the vivacity of his conversation, and whilst contributing to the conviviality of his companions, he was never heard to utter a word, or indulge in a jest, which might savour of vulgarity. Nor did he suffer others to do

so in his presence. For if some of his companions would not desist at his first admonition, he would rebuke them so severely, that they were at once compelled to change the subject. Whilst in the Seminary he often had opportunites for self-victory. The two students who shared his room were rough and unpolished, and a constant source of annoyance to him. He was fond of quiet and study, and they liked merriment and noise. Once, after they had played their pranks for a long time, he begged them to stop, but to no purpose. In spite of his remonstrances, they became worse instead of better. At last one of them said, "We will leave off our game, but first of all I must fillip your nose!" and he suited the action to the word. Joseph keenly felt the boy's insult, but he answered it by silence.

CHAPTER VI.

JOSEPH COTTOLENGO AS A PRIEST AND CONFESSOR.

In the year 1807, when Joseph Cottolengo had received minor orders and was in his twenty-first year, he was compelled to leave the Seminary, as it was again closed by order of the Government. Sadly and reluctantly he bade farewell to the quiet sanctuary of learning, and resumed his studies at home. Here he was greeted with joy and blessings. The angel of the family had returned. His mother was delighted to note his daily growth in piety, his brothers and sisters saw before them a pattern of Christian virtue, and his father sought his counsel in all his domestic and commercial affairs. The times were evil. War ravaged every land. There was no security either for persons or for property. The rich of to-day were poor to-morrow. Antonio Cottolengo, foreseeing perils which might bring ruin on his family, spoke of them to his son, who was wont to weigh human events in the scales of Divine Providence, rather than in those of human prudence. And Antonio often declared that, after hearing his son exhort him to trust in Divine Providence, his fears vanished, and confidence returned to his heart.

At last came the day for which our Levite had so earnestly longed, the day of his ordination. On the 8th of June, 1811, in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, attached to the Ecclesiastical Seminary of Turin, he was ordained priest by Mgr. Paul Joseph Solaro, Bishop of Aosta. A few days later, he said his first Mass in the Church of the Holy Trinity, in his native city of Bra. In Italy, the celebration of the first Mass of a newly-ordained priest is regarded as a solemn event, and celebrated with great rejoicings by his relatives and friends. In the present case, it was not only a domestic, but a public festival, and one in which the townspeople took a prominent part. His fellow-citizens had been the witnesses of his exalted virtues. He had won their esteem and affection by his modest demeanour, his reverence in the sanctuary, his unobtrusive manner, and his gracious charity. The townspeople therefore gladly availed themselves of the opportunity now afforded them of paying him a tribute of well-merited respect and affection. He did not show himself indifferent to their expressions of esteem. "You are kind to me," he said, "and I thank you most sincerely; but all your rejoicings warn me of my duties, and spur me to lead a holy life and to do good. Great indeed is the power of the priest in behalf of people and country, but what if the hands that wield it are not pure? To me no honour is due, Jesus Christ alone is worthy of all honour and glory." On coming down from the altar, after offering the Holy Sacrifice, his heart glowed with gratitude, and he

made a vow never to omit saying Mass daily, and to strive to do so with great reverence and devotion. And he faithfully kept his vow, for, except when he was seriously ill, he said Mass every day. In justification of this holy practice, he used to quote the case of a pious priest who was always afraid that things would go wrong if he omitted to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, and who had found by experience that everything actually did go wrong with him whenever he was hindered by unforeseen circumstances from saying Mass.

Don Joseph Cottolengo was now a priest of God, and could daily offer up the Holy Sacrifice. His waking thoughts were of the altar and of its Eucharistic Lord. Early in the morning, undeterred by the inclemency of the weather, he went to the church. His mother, fearing lest the exposure should prove injurious to his health, remonstrated with him. "Oh! never mind," he said, "an early Mass will never hurt me." Before saying Mass, he kept strict silence, unless when charity or politeness obliged him to speak. His demeanour showed how strongly he was impressed with the solemnity of the act he was going to perform. He had made a thorough study of the rubrics prescribed for each service, and he strictly observed them; and, when duty required it, he exacted from others the same strict observance. When he read the Gospel in the Mass, his tone of voice, his slow, clear utterance and his reverence in kissing the book, bore witness to his lively faith and ardent love. His manner seemed to say: "Oh! how much I do love and

bless Jesus Christ, Who spoke these words, and Mother Church, which bids us repeat them." At the Consecration and Communion, he seemed to be rapt to Heaven; his quivering body, his radiant countenance, his tearful eyes, and unsuppressed sighs revealed to those present the joy of heart of the pious celebrant. His brother Ignatius, a lively, playful lad, who often served his Mass, could not keep his eyes off the young priest whose every motion and gesture he noticed, and on returning home, he asked his mother why his brother wept so much at the altar. "Let him weep," answered the mother, "Joseph knows well why he weeps; tears shed at the altar bring joy. Mark it well, my boy, our home shelters a saint in your brother."

Soon after his ordination, he applied himself to the ministry of the confessional, prompted in this by his desire to win souls for God, and to bring consolation to the sorrowing hearts of men. When in the tribunal of Penance, he welcomed all with equal charity and kindness, never allowing himself to make any distinction of persons. He regarded every soul as redeemed with the Blood of our Divine Lord, and dear to His Sacred Heart, and therefore an object worthy of reverence and love. But there was nevertheless a class of persons for whom he felt special sympathy, and to whom he devoted the greater part of his attention. These were the old soldiers who had been dragged from their peaceful homes and forced to serve in the armies of the first Napoleon. Amid the depravity of the camp, or in barracks contaminated by foul words and deeds,

these poor fellows were destitute of spiritual assistance, and had no will to seek any. He went after them in taverns and in the public squares, he addressed them kindly, and walked with them, talking of wars and battles, of defeats and victories, of wounds and death. And when by degrees he had won their hearts and secured their confidence, he would speak of religion, overcome their difficulties, make them aware of their deplorable condition, and take them home with him to hear their confessions and restore them to a life of grace.

But here we must not omit to note how the exercise of this sacred ministry to which he had devoted himself so earnestly, and in which he found so much consolation, all at once became for him a source of uneasiness and anxiety. He began to fear that he was going to the confessional rather from motives of vanity and self-gratification, than for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He had recourse for light and counsel to the Blessed Virgin Mary, his refuge in all his perplexities. And his prayer was granted even beyond his expectation. Soon afterwards he lost all his attraction for work in the confessional, and turned away from it in utter disgust. Whenever he went to hear confessions, and sat in the confession-box, his body trembled from head to foot, as if a sharp-pointed sword was hanging over him. But he was soon cured of his fear. One morning, Don Amerano, having seen him rush out of his confessional, leaving there his penitents unshriven, went after him, and taking him by the hand, without a word of explanation,

led him back. He obeyed with the simplicity of a child, and resumed the discharge of his sacerdotal office with peace and joy. Another time Don Cottolengo chanced to take the wrong side in a case submitted to his judgment. After a while, perceiving his error, he was sorely distressed. The harder he tried to support his opinion by argument, and show it in its most favourable light, the more manifest his mistake became. "I cannot bear this torture," he said. "I am not fit for this ministry. I must give it up." Don Amerano again came to his rescue, and addressing him with a gentle rebuke, "What," said he, "do you deem yourself better than others? Do you think that great saints and theologians, such as St. Philip Neri and St. Francis de Sales, never erred in such matters?" Comforted by these words, he resumed his labours in the confessional without any further uneasiness.

All his time was devoted to works of piety and charity, the greatest part being given to the poor and the sick. He assiduously visited the public hospital, and he went from bed to bed with sympathy in his heart and upon his countenance, speaking words of comfort and encouragement to all, exhorting all to patience and resignation, bidding some to hope for health, others to look up to Heaven for their crowns. He eagerly availed himself of every opportunity of doing good, and gave wise counsel, admonished persons of their faults, and exhorted them to be religious and virtuous. Once he met a girl going into the house, on a visit to his sister Teresa, and noticed that she was extravagantly and

gaudily dressed. "My child," he said, "you are quite mistaken if you believe that people are looking at you to admire you. Be sure that they only laugh at your vanity. Besides, what are all these trappings but a veil to cover your shame and misery?" The girl never forgot the admonition. Another time, when he was leaning, after dinner, on a balcony overlooking the inner yard, with his young brother Ignatius, who was munching some roasted chestnuts, with which he had filled his pockets, a poor man made his appearance below, and begged an alms. Don Cottolengo dropped him a coin, and, turning to Ignatius, said, "Throw him down some of your chestnuts." "I have no more," was the quick retort. But the bulging pockets of the lad told a different story. Joseph took the boy downstairs, and told him to empty his pockets into the beggar's hands. Then he said, "Kneel down, you naughty boy, and ask this man's pardon, and know that you have lied not to this man, but to Jesus Christ, Whose image he bears." The boy grew wiser by this stern lesson.

CHAPTER VII.

HE IS APPOINTED VICAR OF CORNEGLIANO.

Whilst Don Cottolengo was engaged in the discharge of such duties as charity and zeal suggested, his heart was not at rest. It would seem to have been stirred with longings for a wider field of labour, and with aspirations after higher sanctity. Had God some particular work for him to do? Had Divine Providence set him aside for a special mission connected with the glory of God and the salvation of souls? He could not tell. He must wait till God vouchsafed to make known His will. Some of his friends advised him to finish his studies and follow the higher course of theology in the University of Turin; many Rectors of different parishes invited him to give them his assistance, and share with them the labours of their parochial ministrations. He answered all in the same manner: "Let me wait, let me first know God's will." In the meantime, the Bishop was pleased to nominate him Vicar or Assistant Priest of Cornegliano, a town once belonging to the diocese of Asti, but now attached to that of Albi. He looked upon this appointment as heaven-sent, and without delay

proceeded to his destination, to the regret of his relatives and townspeople.

The fame of his exalted qualities of heart and mind had preceded him in Cornegliano, and the people crowded to welcome him with signs of joy, while the Rector of the parish, a venerable and infirm priest who was longing for rest after his long labours in the ministry, thanked God for sending to his assistance a young priest so distinguished for zeal and piety. Don Cottolengo set to work at once with all the energy of a young labourer in the vineyard of Jesus Christ, anxious about nothing else than to sanctify the souls committed to his care. But well aware that the shortest and surest means of sanctifying our neighbour is to sanctify first of all our own selves, he resolved to preach more by example than by words, and to be himself a pattern of those virtues in which he desired others to excel. He therefore arranged his manner of life so as to be a true model of Christian perfection, a spur to the good, and a rebuke to the lukewarm. Loving retirement and disliking external distractions, he was always to be found at the presbytery, unless called elsewhere in the discharge of his pastoral duties. No one applied to him for counsel, aid, or consolation without obtaining what he sought. He loved recollection and silence, and never took part in conversations about wars and battles, national aspirations, and political commotions. His time was divided between study and prayer. The Blessed Sacrament had a particular attraction for him, and he spent many hours in fervent adoration before

the tabernacle. In the church and the vestry he observed the strictest silence, and caused others to do the same.

When he said Mass, which generally took him twenty-five minutes, his reverent manner, his exact observance of the rubrics, and his tone of voice, gave evidence of the deep reverence and devotion which filled his soul. He had nothing so much at heart as to induce people to hear Mass on week-days, and he often exhorted his parishioners to come and enrich their souls with the precious blessings that flow from the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. "Be sure," he used to say, "the time you subtract from your work in order to hear Mass, is not lost time; to hear Holy Mass ensures blessings on all earthly concerns." He often accosted people, either in the town or in the country, and with his usual gracious smile, said: "My good friend, how did you begin the day? Did you go to Mass this morning? Mark well, the richest treasures of the Christian are found in the Mass. Woe to us, if we had not the Mass. Believe me, go to Mass every day, and it will always be well with you."

His assiduity in attending the confessional was very edifying. He was always at the call of his penitents, and, though he rapidly got through the confessions of those who needed little help or instruction, he listened to sinners long and patiently, and spared neither time nor pains in instructing the ignorant. It was noticed that he kept strict custody of eyes in the confessional, and was satisfied to know the consciences of his penitents without

seeing their faces. With regard to the sick, he was not only ready to attend them at any moment, but he anticipated their summons whenever he knew that his ministrations were needed. For this purpose he requested the medical man of the town to give him timely notice when the state of his patients became serious. In visiting them Father Cottolengo was so sympathetic and gentle in word and manner, and so full of thought for their little wants, that they often said, "When our good priest visits us, he seems to take away from us all our sufferings. He is indeed an angel and a saint. We have never seen any one like him."

Preaching and catechizing children took a great deal of his time. Children were so much attracted by him, that they went of their own accord to his instructions, and their parents used to bless him for making them so good and gentle. He prepared his sermons carefully, and made himself thoroughly master of their subject-matter. To secure God's help more surely, he placed each sermon under the patronage of some saint; thus he dedicated his sermon on the education of children to St. Monica, and to St. Thomas Aquinas that on continence and purity. At first his style was rhetorical and ornate, but he soon abandoned it for a simpler style, better suited to his congregation. But his earnestness and fervour arrested the attention of his hearers and brought many to a better life. They could not fail to recognize that his words came from a heart fully convinced of the truth, and burning with love for souls. His sermons were always short, and he

used to say: "Whenever our sermons exceed thirty or forty minutes, whatever is said is lost."

When he went out he was remarkable for his grave and modest manner. Without making any distinction between rich and poor, he was the first to raise his hat in greeting, meeting every one with a pleasant smile and friendly word. He could be gay as well as grave, and witty sayings and innocent jokes came readily from his lips. *Addio, mio caro,* was his ordinary form of greeting; and it was followed by a word of good counsel.

The poor seemed to have a special claim upon him. He was markedly drawn to them, for he saw in them the adorable Person of our Lord. They followed him everywhere, knowing that if it were in his power they would not be sent away empty-handed. When children asked an alms, he did not give them money, lest they should spend it in toys or sweets, but he bought them food. He was unconcerned when his kindness was sometimes imposed upon, for when he gave alms, he did so for God's sake. It once happened that Don Cottolengo received some money for Masses. A man seeing it in his hands, went up and asked the loan of it. Though every one knew that the applicant was a notorious borrower who never paid his debts, Don Cottolengo gave him the money, saying: "If he does not repay me, God will." Another time he heard that a respectable family were in great poverty, and, being unable to help them with money, he sent them his best coat, with a request that they would sell it, and with its price supply their urgent needs. The

coat was accepted gratefully, but it was never sold. It was regarded as a relic of a saint, and preserved as an earnest of future blessings. Mgr. Eugene Galletti, Bishop of Alba, obtained a piece of it, and treasured it in his palace in remembrance of the holy priest whom he deeply honoured and respected.

CHAPTER VIII.

DON COTTOLENGO, DOCTOR IN DIVINITY.

TIMES were better; order and peace had been restored; Piedmont had regained its independence; Napoleon had fallen; and Victor Emmanuel I. had returned to his Kingdom of Sardinia. On hearing that the University of Turin had been restored to its former position, and that the intended French professors had been replaced by Italian teachers of sound doctrine, Don Cottolengo resolved to resume his interrupted studies, and prepare himself for the degree of Doctor in Theology. His spiritual adviser, Don Amerano, and Don Ferrero, his former professor, now Vice-President of the College of Provinces at Turin, approved his design and encouraged him to carry it out. Having therefore resigned the charge of his parish, he started for Turin in October, 1814. Two obstacles, however, seemed to stand in the way of the execution of his design. But the providence of God, into Whose hands he had confidently abandoned himself, and who was

preparing him by degrees for the special mission for which he had been chosen, helped him out of his difficulties. In the first place he was without means for self-support at the University, as he had no income of his own, and his parents were unable to make him any allowance, on account of their straitened circumstances. But a good old lady relative, who esteemed and loved him, offered to defray all his expenses. The other obstacle was raised by family affection. His mother, in her blind affection, thought more of her own present feelings than of the future interest of her son, and could not bear the idea of separation from him. She used all the arguments a woman's wit and a mother's love could suggest to shake his resolution and induce him to remain at home. But he pleaded his cause so forcibly that the good woman was at last convinced that to oppose his departure would be to interfere with the designs of Divine Providence, so she quietly acquiesced, and on leaving home he took with him her blessing.

He was admitted as a resident pupil in the College of Provinces. Don Stephen Ferrero, its Vice-President, welcomed him with open arms. He was naturally glad to bring into the house a young priest conspicuous for love of piety and study, for prompt obedience to rule, and for cheerfulness and amiability. We must here mention two of his schoolfellows, who afterwards became celebrated, and whose memory is still held in veneration. One was Canon Peter Scavini, Vicar-General of the diocese of Novara, a man eminent for learning and

virtue, and the author of a valuable work on Moral Theology. The other was Mgr. Andrew Charvaz, who became tutor to the sons of Charles Albert, and, afterwards, Archbishop of Genoa. Both were close friends of Don Cottolengo. Mgr. Charvaz, speaking once with Father Albert about his brother's great virtue, said, "If ever you should be called to bear witness to his sanctity, in the process of his canonization, do not hesitate to say that we never noticed in him anything that was not most edifying. We saw him every morning at the altar, beaming with the light of angelic fervour while offering the Holy Sacrifice; and, during recreation-time, we used to catch him in the study-hall, kneeling before his desk, rapt in prayer. Indeed, we had in him an object of reverence and admiration."

On the 14th of March, 1816, after the usual defensions of theological theses in presence of the Faculty of the University and the public, he was made Doctor of Divinity. On this occasion he was much commended for his skill and ease in combating the arguments of his opponents, and for his unaffected modesty. When urged by his friends to compete for a fellowship in the Theological College, he refused to do so, saying, "Let me thank the Blessed Virgin Mary for what she has given me. If I have been successful, it is not owing to my merit, but to her favour. I must now be satisfied. To attempt to go further, would be an act of presumption on my part. I neither possess the necessary talent for that honour, nor do I need it in order to fulfil

the duties of my vocation." On the day appointed for him to receive the Doctor's cap, he said Mass in the celebrated sanctuary of the Consolata, to obtain God's blessing through the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

No sooner was the ceremony over than he hastened away from the capital and went back to his native town to resume his humble labours among the poor, the sick, and the ignorant, and to await a further manifestation of God's will in his regard. It happened that a contagious disease was widely spread among the people of the town. Don Cottolengo, full of zeal and regardless of his personal safety, devoted himself to the stricken victims, and provided as far as he could for their spiritual and temporal welfare. His friends cautioned him to be prudent; his mother begged him with tears to protect himself from the plague. But all in vain. "Am I not," he said to his mother, "a soldier of Christ? And do not soldiers show their valour on the battlefield?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CANON OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

God had chosen Joseph Cottolengo to be the Apostle of Divine Providence, and Turin was to be the scene of his wonderful apostolate.

First of all he was offered the directorship of the Hospital of St. John, in Turin. This was done in recognition of his high merit; but the hospital was not a field of labour vast enough to satisfy his zeal. He then, by the advice of his friends, applied for the rectorship of a parish in the same diocese; but it was given to some one else. Meanwhile he was informed that he had been nominated to a canonry of the Collegiate Church of Corpus Christi at Turin. When asked their opinion as to his merits, Don Agodino and Don Casalis, both canons of the same church, answered, "We were present at the public disputation when he was made Doctor, and have heard so much good of him, that we are perfectly sure he will be a bright ornament to our body." In giving his vote Don Ferrero remarked: "There are in Turin many priests, highly commendable for zeal, learning, and piety, but Don Cottolengo outshines them all. He will be the gem of our church." It was not then surprising that he was unanimously

elected, and that the election was ratified by the members of the City Council, who had the patronage of the Church of Corpus Christi, and who made an exception in allowing the appointment of Cottolengo, who, not being a native of Turin, was by statute ineligible for the post.

The body of canons of which Don Cottolengo had been made a member, and which numbered the most eminent priests of the clergy of Turin, had been formed in the year 1655, with the object of ministering to the magnificent Basilica which had been raised in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, on the very spot made famous by one of the most stupendous miracles, wrought to prove the Real Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. Its members lived together under a common rule and an elected Superior, like the Canons Regular of old. Later on these canons of Corpus Christi were affiliated to the canons of the Cathedral, and participated in all their privileges.

On the 31st of October, 1818, Cottolengo was invested with his new dignity. So little did he esteem himself that he could not understand how the venerable canons had chosen him; and to those who came to congratulate him on his promotion, he would say: "How strange and unmerited are all these congratulations. Are you not aware that there is nothing good in me, and that, far from aspiring after the honours of the great city, I had resolved to remain in my obscure home to mend old shoes and plant cabbages?" The humble Canon of Corpus Christi did not yet see how God was

preparing him for the work for which he had been chosen, and how in the city of Turin he would be trained in the school of self-sacrifice, to become the champion of Divine Providence, a martyr of charity, and a model of priestly virtues.

Our populous cities may be compared to magnificent mausoleums which have been raised in memory of the dead. We may be struck by this grandeur, but if we ask ourselves what is within these magnificent monuments, the answer comes quick and stern: "A heap of bones, a handful of dust." And thus when we look at the squares and streets of our cities, at their palaces and shops, at their parks and gardens, we may perhaps think that all the inhabitants must be rich and happy. But we very soon change our opinion when we go into the dark, dirty slums whence the sun is shut out, and where the very air is poisonous; where miserable human beings, made to God's image, live in poverty and hunger, with scarcely a hand to help them and few hearts to sympathize with them.

Canon Cottolengo was now bound by the duties of his office to visit the squalid quarters of Turin and to minister to the poor who had their homes there. At the sight of their sufferings, the fire of charity burned brightly in his heart, and he vowed to devote his life to help them. But where was he to procure means to provide for so many needs and to relieve so many sufferers? He had no money of his own, and he could expect very little from his parents. To the rich aristocracy of the city he had no access. In order to help the poor as he wished,

he needed money, and he had none. What was he to do? He cast his care upon the Lord God and confidently expected from Him what he could not obtain from men.

CHAPTER X.

CANON COTTOLENGO AT WORK.

Canon Cottolengo set to work with a full sense of his responsibilities. Not only did he discharge his own duties, but he offered to undertake those of his brother-canons. "Am I not," he would say, "the least and last of all in age and talent, and does it not become me to lend them a helping hand? I am young and strong, and nothing suits me better than hard work." He begged the sacristan to spare the other canons and to give him the hard work; and that he might be always in readiness for it, he remained in the vestry, or in the church, where he prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, or before the altar of Our Lady of Graces.

Being constantly engaged in the ministrations of religion and charity, he became more fully acquainted with the sad condition of the poor and the sick. The sight of their misery excited in his heart a strong desire to help and comfort them, and he often visited them. His appearance in the sick-room was like the coming of an angel. His kindly greeting, his sympathy, and his delicate

attentions were refreshing to the aching hearts and wearied bodies of the sufferers. His presence brightened their spirits, and his kindness won their confidence. With amusing stories and witticisms he paved the way to serious conversation, during which he would give them salutary advice, exhort them to resignation and repentance, and prepare them for the sacraments. On leaving the abodes of suffering and distress, he carried with him a vivid picture of the sufferers and their manifold trials, and he longed to multiply himself if so he might better alleviate their misery.

The poor shared with the sick the practical help given by Canon Cottolengo's benevolence. They all knew him and followed him, knowing that they were sure of a welcome and assistance. His fondness for them was quite remarkable. He saw in them the members of our Lord's great family, in whose midst the Divine Master delights to dwell. All the money that came into Canon Cottolengo's possession was freely given to them.

Often, too, he would go into the market-place and buy as much bread, meat, coffee, sugar, and fruit as he could afford, and then hiding his purchases under his cloak, or putting them into big pockets, he would hurry to his poor and discharge his cargo of charity into their hands. When his purse was empty, he would empty his wardrobe of its contents, that with them he might clothe the naked. His mother, who took particular care to keep it well supplied, wondered at the scantiness of her son's clothing, and found it necessary to buy

him fresh garments nearly every month. The fireplace in his room was, even during the severest winters, always cold and cheerless. The fire-wood was set aside for the use of some poor family. When shivering with cold, he would walk briskly, or jump and run up and down his room; and if he chanced to be surprised when so doing, he would say, jokingly: "Come to the circus; see how well I can imitate the wild bear."

When he went out he would give to the poor, even without being asked, whatever money he had with him, never looking to see how much he was giving. "What?" he was once asked by his brother Ignatius, a student in theology in the Dominican convent, "you give alms to all, and you never look to see how much you give and to whom?" "If our Lord," answered the Canon, "will not have the left hand know what the right hand does, why should the eye know? Remember that it is Jesus Himself Who comes to us in the poor; we must look at Him and give to Him." From the reverence and affection with which he approached them, it was evident that Canon Cottolengo saw in the poor only the Person of Jesus Christ. "These are my dearest friends," he would say. The greater their destitution, the greater was his tenderness and compassion towards them. When unable to help them according to their needs, he bade them, and with burning words such as only saints know how to utter, be patient and resigned.

But the more liberal he was, the more pressing

were the calls on his liberality, and, in order to be able to provide for the wants of the poor, he was obliged to become himself a beggar for their sake. Turin has always been famous among the cities of Italy for the number and magnificence of its charitable institutions. Its pious and wealthy inhabitants are not slow to open their purses, when their hearts are touched and their sympathy aroused. He resolved on making an appeal to their charity. He went among them and soon gained their good-will by his charm of manners. Then by earnest entreaties, innocent jokes, and witty pleasantries, and by vivid descriptions of the misfortunes and sufferings of the poor, he opened the purses of the rich and obtained generous alms.

He was quick to seize opportunities of obtaining something for his poor. Thus when, in visiting a rich family, refreshments were served, he would sip the contents of the goblet, then pushing it aside, he would significantly remark: "I know of a poor old man to whose stomach a few drops of this exquisite wine would be a life-giving cordial." And the cordial would soon find its way to the old man. If the ladies were engaged in needlework, he would observe: "In such a place there were some poor women in want of warm clothing, and many little girls in need of decent dresses," and the hint was not unheeded. As there were in the city crowds of sick poor, he appealed to the rich to visit them as the suffering members of Jesus Christ. Those who responded to this appeal he formed into a congregation, whose object it was, not only to

visit and tend the sick poor during the day, but likewise to minister to them at night.

While engaged in these works of mercy, Canon Cottolengo was fervently praying that he might understand God's will in his own regard. He did not as yet see what special work God had in store for him, but he felt that he had been set aside for some great undertaking for which he was now being prepared. People who saw and knew him, also looked for great things from him, and, though he strove to avoid notoriety and do good unostentatiously, his sincere piety, deep humility, and active charity were topics of conversations, and he was everywhere known as the "Good Canon."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE PULPIT AND IN THE CONFESSIONAL.

THE fire of charity, which had been kindled in the good Canon's heart by prayer and piety, often burst forth in the pulpit in words full of strength and unction. He had the gift of arresting the attention of his audience, and communicating to them his own enthusiasm. At the time of which we are writing, he had resumed the rhetorical, ornate style of preaching which was in that age usual among sacred orators. But, on being admonished by some wise and experienced priests, who feared that his highly polished and artificial style might hinder the good effects to be looked for from his preaching, he at once laid it aside and resumed the clear, simple method which in former times had never failed to impress the minds of his hearers with the truths of religion, and to bring willing hearts under the yoke of Jesus Christ. Canon Cottolengo was exceedingly grateful for the admonition, and said to some of his friends: "I am glad I have been made sensible of my error. I have now nothing more to do with high-flown eloquence and flowery figures: henceforth I will preach nothing but the Gospel, in a plain, clear, familiar style."

Simple though his sermons were, they were well prepared. When it was his turn to preach, he sought light and learning before the Blessed Sacrament, or at the altar of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, who were sent to preach the Gospel all over the world. Here he thought out his sermons, and here his heart was enkindled with the fervour which always finds its way to the hearts of men. It happened at times that his mind was so overpowered with the flood of light he received from above, that he was scarcely able to choose the subject of his sermon. He would then take advice from the sacristan, or from the cleric who escorted him to the pulpit, and preach upon the subject suggested by them. When he was once, with Don Thomas Ghilardi, who was afterwards elected Bishop of Mondovì, visiting a convent of nuns, they asked him to give an address to the community. All were seated in the convent chapel, breathlessly awaiting his first words, but he remained silent. At last, turning to Don Ghilardi, who was by his side, he whispered: "What are we doing here? We had better be off. I do not know what to speak about." "I will give you a text," replied Don Ghilardi: *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra*—"In silence and in hope will your strength be." This was enough, for Canon Cottolengo immediately took it up, and preached a sermon that filled the good religious with devotion and edification.

When he preached upon the Blessed Sacrament, as was often the case in the Church of Corpus

Christi, his whole manner showed that he was absorbed in his subject, and that he had been inspired at the altar with the thoughts to which he gave utterance from the pulpit. Whenever the people knew that he was going to preach, they thronged around his pulpit, remarking, that though his sermons were plain and unadorned, they went to their hearts and influenced them for good.

He was once asked to give the spiritual retreat to the students of the Royal University, a task of much labour and little profit, which even the most popular and successful preachers used to decline.

He accepted it unhesitatingly, saying: "I hope to be able to get them through. If Balaam's ass knew how to speak and when to speak, I think I ought to know." And in fact his retreat sermons were preached with such attractive simplicity, that the students were readily won by them, and he happily reaped a harvest of young souls for God. When the retreat was over he remarked to some friends: "Well, well, I went to them without elaborate sermons or Ciceronian eloquence. I explained to them simply the doctrines of the catechism, and it did them a lot of good. After all, those students are fine fellows, and they can be caught without sugar and honey."

In going about the city on his mission of zeal and charity, he availed himself of every opportunity to win souls to God. In the streets, in the shops, or in the market-place, he would speak to those whom he met of the beauty of virtue, the happiness of a Christian life, and the misery of sin; and he

would do it so earnestly and brightly, that people listened attentively and profited by what he said. "We love him," they said, "because he is not a rigid censor, but a kind father." Thus people went away from him with a light heart, full of good resolutions, and bearing in their souls a seed that in due season yielded plentiful fruit.

Canon Cottolengo was unwearied in his attendance in the confessional. In order to give his penitents plenty of time he said Mass early, and after his thanksgiving, he went to the confessional, being the first priest in the church to go there and the last to leave. People flocked to his confessional because they were sure of a hearty welcome. His heart was full of patience and kindness, and he knew how easily sinners are driven away from the tribunal of Penance by the fear of rigour and rebuke. His words were few, but, like fiery darts, they pierced the hearts of his penitents and left there a lasting impression. He preferred to hear the confessions of poor labourers and of hardened sinners rather than of others; yet all were welcome, and the rich and learned, laymen and ecclesiastics, had recourse to him for spiritual advice, and made rapid progress in the way of perfection under his guidance.

He had a singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The people knew it, and, edified by his fervour and piety, would say: "Whenever the Canon is free from duty, he is sure to be found on guard before the tabernacle." Anxious to inspire his penitents with the same devotion, he

never failed to exhort them, both in the confessional and from the pulpit, to the practice of daily Communion, saying that if any one wished to lead a Christian life, he ought to hunger after the Bread of the Altar.

About this time Canon Cottolengo became acquainted with Father Michael Fontana, of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. A true son and disciple of his great Father, the Oratorian was distinguished for his eminent virtues and indefatigable labours in the vineyard of the Lord, and for his love of prayer and mortification; and he was held in great esteem by the people of Turin. Don Cottolengo chose this holy priest for his spiritual director, and having disclosed to him the innermost secrets of his heart, and given him his entire confidence, he henceforth never undertook anything of consequence without his advice and consent. Every Friday he went to confession, not by night, or as it were by stealth, but in the open day, in the public Church of St. Philip; and never hesitated to tell those whom he met when going or returning, that he had been to confession.

CHAPTER XII.

DON COTTOLENGO'S CHARACTER.

In studying the public and private life of this Venerable Servant of God, we shall see that the particular feature that marked his sanctity and stamped his character, assigning to him his special place in the glorious galaxy of saints, was his boundless, constant, unshaken confidence in Divine Providence. He seems to have been raised up by God to be the Apostle of His Providence in the nineteenth century. Moreover, we cannot help seeing in Canon Cottolengo a striking resemblance to three great Saints of the seventeenth century, St. Vincent of Paul, St. Francis of Sales, and St. Philip Neri. St. Vincent de Paul, as we shall see in the course of this narrative, he seems to reflect in his charity and zeal, his boundless confidence, his breadth of view, his courage in undertaking weighty matters, his fortitude in the midst of difficulties, and his firmness in carrying into execution the works entered upon for the glory of God and the relief of man. He reproduces St. Francis de Sales in his spirit of sweetness and gentleness, his tender sympathy and affection for his fellow-creatures, and his constant, patient labours to benefit them. In many of the

details of his life, he recalls St. Philip Neri with his pleasing countenance, his winning smiles, his amusing jokes, and even his pious oddities and the strange fashions under which he so often veiled his sanctity.

Saints often possess charms which endear them to men. Don Cottolengo's charm was the unclouded cheerfulness which beamed from his countenance, on which gravity and dignity were blent with candour and simplicity. There was nothing severe and harsh in his looks; his words were ever the bearers of consolation and joy, his ears were never shut against the appeals of the poor and sorrowing. There was no pain for which he had not some balsam. His heart, overflowing with charity, was open to all; without distinction of persons, rich and poor, high and low, being all equal in his eyes. His conversation was always bright and interesting, enlivened by witty repartee, amusing anecdotes, and innocent jokes, by means of which he often banished melancholy, gladdened the sad, quelled anger, and, at times, silenced the claims of his creditors.

Once he had borrowed from Canon Valletti two hundred francs, in order to relieve the distress of an afflicted family. "Remember," said the lender, "this is not a donation, but a loan." Canon Cottolengo was often reminded of his indebtedness and pressed to refund the money, but without effect. "Well, well," he said, "do not fret about your money, but mark that you are the debtor and not I, and when you come to settle matters, you will be the loser." After a few days, the debt was cancelled

by Don Valletti, who, at the same time, added a fresh donation of two hundred francs for the poor. It was often remarked that, though cheerful and fond of wit and jokes, Cottolengo shunned all kind of coarseness, being careful to avoid whatever could offend charity or purity. Nor would he suffer any one to utter a word which might give offence or wound the feelings of his neighbours. In such cases he would walk up to the offender and, with a gentle rebuke, say: "If you love God, you must also love your neighbour, and refrain from offensive remarks." He was in no way touchy concerning himself, he never took any one to task for abusing him, for his humility made him welcome ill-treatment. But if he happened to hear any one speak in his praise, he would uncover his head, and making a low bow, hurry away. He could put up with blame, but not with praise.

But God, Who humbles the proud and exalts the humble, often vouchsafed to reward Don Cottolengo's humility and manifest his sanctity. As he was crossing Piazza d'Erbe, now called Piazza di Città, early one morning, he noticed an honest merchant, who having just opened his store, was leaning against the door, absorbed in deep meditation, tapping his silver snuff-box as if to draw from it a spark to enlighten his confused mind. The priest saluted him and said, smiling: "You may muse on till doomsday, but your scheme will never succeed." Signor Zina, such was the merchant's name, wondered at the unexpected remark, the more so, as he had never broached the subject of

his thoughts to any living being; and his surprise was still greater when, according to the prediction, his undertaking proved a total failure, despite all his skill and efforts.

A true disciple of St. Philip Neri, he had learned in his school those lessons of self-abasement by which the Saint had exposed himself to the ridicule of men. When Cottolengo passed through the Piazza d'Erbe, where the vegetable-market of the city was held, the salesmen, with whom he was a favourite, used to load him with a large quantity of their fruits; he thanked them and walked home with his arms full of the gifts, freely partaking of them on his way, and offering them to those whom he met.

Once, as he was returning home with a parcel of roasted chestnuts in his hand, he was accosted in the street by two ladies of rank. Whilst conversing with them, he opened his parcel and offered them the chestnuts so perseveringly, that to avoid notice, they accepted a few. But he was not satisfied. "You must taste them, ladies; they are very good, warm and fresh from the stand." To free themselves from his importunity they did so, much to their confusion and to the amusement of the passers-by.

Don Cottolengo loved the retirement of his quiet and modest dwelling, which consisted of two rooms, plainly furnished and with no other ornaments but such as were strictly in character with his sacred calling. A picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary was on a small altar, and before it he recited the Canonical

Hours. Here also he loved to pray, often with his face prostrate on the ground, or with his eyes so intently fixed on the picture of his Heavenly Queen, that he did not notice who entered the room. A silver lamp was always burning before it, and fresh flowers were never wanting. Two canary-birds which he had trained himself, and which he daily fed, he called the little songsters of the Blessed Madonna, and left them to sing their sweet melodies in his absence. "My fair musicians," he would say, "so long as I am in, let your song be still, if you like; but while I am away, sing your sweetest tunes in honour of the Blessed Madonna. She is your mistress no less than mine."

At the end of the year 1825 and the beginning of 1826, Canon Cottolengo seemed to be going through a great spiritual change. A dark cloud appeared to be passing over his mind, which up till this had been so serene and calm. His accustomed cheerfulness fled from his countenance. He became more retired, silent, and serious. He prayed more frequently and begged prayers of others. By degrees he stripped his rooms of almost all their modest ornaments, removed the pictures, gave away his books, disposed of his gold watch and silk cloak. His parents and friends noticed what was taking place, but could not account for it. "It is a trial," they said, "a visitation from the Lord, it will soon be over." But it seemed as if God was detaching His servant more entirely from creatures in order to draw him more closely to Himself, to speak to him and reveal to him more clearly and definitely

the work he was called upon to do. "I will enter the Oratory," he said, "and, away from the world and its pleasures, live wholly for God and the Blessed Virgin Mary." His director, Don Fontana, would not hear of this. "Banish this thought," he said, "this is not your vocation." Canon Valietti, anxious to restore peace and joy to his friend and subject, advised him to read the Life of St. Vincent de Paul. He did so, and its perusal filled him with admiration of the Saint whose soul was so full of God, whose works of charity were so numerous and so wonderful, and whose heart had so well learned the greatness of self-immolation for God's sake in the cause of suffering humanity. Canon Cottolengo saw a new horizon opening before him, a new light enlightening him. It was to him a revelation from above. God had made known to him His will. He had received his commission for the work assigned to him. He now knew that he was to be the Apostle of Divine Providence.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOSPITAL OF VOLTA ROSSA.

Don Cottolengo's probation was over. God had tried him and found him worthy of his mission. And he was ready for it. His heart was filled with the love of God, to Whose providence he had completely abandoned himself and Whose name he longed to glorify, and with the love of his neighbour, whose sufferings he had vowed to alleviate. Thenceforward he devoted to ministrations of charity his life, his time, his talents, as a messenger from Divine Providence to the poor and suffering. Having taken his resolution, he hastened to inaugurate his work of charity in Volta Rossa, which foreshadowed the Piccola Casa, the Little House of Providence, where many sufferers afterwards found a refuge and a home.

The following incident seems to have given occasion for the foundation of the Hospital of Volta Rossa. One day in September, 1827, Don Cottolengo was summoned to the bedside of Jeanne Marie Gonet, a young Frenchwoman, who had fallen dangerously ill in Turin, while on her way from Milan to Lyons, her native city, with her husband and three little children. Poverty and fatigue soon brought

her near death. She had found a miserable lodging for herself and her family in a small room of the Dogana Vecchia. The poor woman, who was soon to become a mother, had been unable to gain admittance to either of the two public hospitals, where nursing and medical attendance would, she hoped, have ultimately restored her to health. She was prepared for death by the pious Canon, and died in his presence. At the sight of the lifeless corpse, the grief of the motherless children and the wild despair of the bereaved husband, the compassionate Canon shed bitter tears, and his heart was filled with anguish. "What," he said to himself, "in a city, so rich in charitable institutions, and so distinguished for Christian generosity, shall any one, whether native or foreigner, be allowed to die without a shelter or a home? What if such a painful case should occur again? Shall distress and poverty knock at our doors, and shall we turn our face from them and coldly dismiss them? Is this our charity?"

Absorbed in these thoughts, towards the close of that Sunday evening, he hurried to the Church of Corpus Christi, and, kneeling before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, spent some time in fervent prayer. Then rising and addressing the sacristan, he said, "Go and toll the bell; unveil the statue of the Madonna, light the candles; this evening we must pray; the Madonna must obtain for us a big grace." He felt confident that the Virgin Mother of our Lord, whose heart is all love and tenderness for the poor and the afflicted, and who, when about

to become a mother, had been brutally refused a shelter by the inhabitants of Bethlehem, would now vouchsafe her protection and show him a sure way to help and relieve the needy. Nor was he disappointed. After having devoutly recited the Rosary, he rose, his eyes beaming with joy, as if he had heard a voice telling him that he had not prayed in vain. When he entered the vestry, he was heard to say: "Blessed be the Holy Madonna; she has granted the grace I asked for." On reaching home, he vividly described, to the canons of the Congregation, the sad scene which he had witnessed a few hours before, and pleaded so earnestly the cause of poverty and suffering, that the good canons with one accord acceded to his design of opening in the parish a hospital in which the sick poor might be lodged and nursed.

Canon Cottolengo rejoiced at the success of his plan, and spent the whole night in fervent thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin, to whose gracious intercession he ascribed such a favour. Early the next day he secured for his purpose nine rooms in a house called Volta Rossa. "I rent these rooms," he said, "in the name of Divine Providence; and I am certain that, trusting in it, I shall never become bankrupt." He furnished them with what was most necessary for sick-rooms, gratefully accepting what was given to him for his new work, and charging to the account of Divine Providence what was to be paid for. Nor was Providence slow to respond to this trust. A pious benefactor paid for the furniture of the rooms. Dr. Lorenzo Granetti offered his

medical attendance gratis; and Paul Anglesio, the apothecary, supplied the medicines free of charge. On the 17th of January, 1827, the Canon, overwhelmed with joy, admitted into the Hospital of Volta Rossa five patients, to whom, in a few days, were added twenty-five more, as many as could be accommodated in the rising institution. As he looked at those sick-rooms and their inhabitants, his mind must have reverted to the time when, as a child, he used to measure rooms and in his fancy place in them beds for the sick poor; and now he rejoiced that the childish dream was at last realized.

Worldly wisdom and human pusillanimity would not only have shrunk from such a scheme, but would have condemned it as rash and presumptuous on the part of its originators. But Don Cottolengo was not guided by the prudence of the world, and his courage was strengthened from above. He trusted not in himself, nor in the favour of men, but in the power and goodness of God. The work was not his own, but the work of God, Who would take care of it. While his heart was full of compassion for this world's sufferers, and longed to come to their assistance, he saw that his hands were empty; but the God in Whom he trusted filled them with the treasures of His riches, and so enabled him to follow his heart's promptings. He always experienced the liberality of God's providence. At the present moment God sent him a friend and benefactor in the person of Cavalier Ferrero, a pious and rich gentleman, who put his purse at the Canon's disposal, and who, at his

death, left all his fortune to the newly founded institution.

The following incident may help to show the spirit by which Don Cottolengo was guided. He was showing his small hospital to his brother, Father Albert, of the Dominican Order. "I cannot see," said the latter, "the necessity for such an institution. Have we not in our city hospitals enough for the accommodation of all our sick? Besides, how do you expect to defray the expenses incurred by such a place? Who will supply the funds?" "It is not man's place," replied his brother, "to search into the deep mysteries of Divine Providence. Our duty is to remove all obstacles to its working, and then co-operate with it. Recall to mind how the grand Hospital of St. John was started with but two beds in the belfry of that church. I cannot foresee or foretell what may happen, but I know that it is foolish to seek to enclose the mighty working of God's providence within the narrow limits of our petty minds." Towards the end of this year, his sister Teresa called on him, and, fearing that he had undertaken a task beyond his power, candidly asked him whence were to come the funds for the maintenance of his hospital. "I will tell you," said he; "only yesterday, when I had made up my accounts, I found I was ten francs short. I was putting away my books, when I heard a ring at the door. I answered the bell. A gentleman, unknown to me, handed me twenty-five francs and, without speaking a word, disappeared."

The Hospital of Volta Rossa was the forerunner of the Piccola Casa (the Little House of Providence) of which we shall have much to say in the course of this history. The 17th of January, St. Anthony's day, and the anniversary of the foundation of the Hospital of Volta Rossa, is every year kept as a feast with great solemnity. A *Te Deum* is sung in the church attached to the establishment, and a sermon is given by some eminent preacher, in which reference is always made to the sad case of Jeanne Marie Gonet, whose deplorable death led Canon Cottolengo to undertake the long-cherished design which he ultimately realized in the Piccola Casa.

CHAPTER II.

THE VINCENTIAN SISTERS.

So far the Hospital of Volta Rossa had been a success. But charity is like a fire, which increases in proportion to the quantity of fuel with which it is fed; and Volta Rossa, which had been founded by Cottolengo's charity, was now to expand and increase both in size and scope. Meanwhile he had to provide for the government of the hospital, and the comfort of its inmates. At first some ladies and gentlemen, desirous to co-operate in the good work of Don Cottolengo, had taken it in turn to attend upon the sick in the hospital during a few hours which they could steal either from business or pleasure. But this could not continue. To manage the establishment well he stood in need of a body of reliable, intelligent, well-trained nurses, who, actuated by charity and disengaged from the cares of the world, should devote their lives to this work of mercy, which is at once so repugnant to nature and ill-rewarded by men. He sought light and counsel before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament and the picture of the Madonna; and as he did so, the institution of a Sisterhood came into his mind. He resolved to undertake it, and with the greater

energy, because he felt that God had blessed his designs.

In order to execute it he saw that he must secure the good-will and services of a woman qualified to take charge of the new Congregation. He had not to search for one long. God, Who had sent Louise le Gras to St. Vincent de Paul, and Jane Frances de Chantal to St. Francis de Sales, had prepared for our apostle in Mary Ann Nasi Pullini, the person fitted to carry out his project. This pious young lady had retired after her husband's death to her father's quiet home, with the intention of entering the Visitation Order, as soon as her father should cease to need a daughter's care. But her intention did not meet with the Canon's approval. He bade her keep herself in readiness to obey another call and perform a special work which Providence had set apart for her. She obeyed, and when the servant of God invited her to take charge of the religious family which he was about to found, she willingly accepted the office assigned her, consecrating not only her person, but likewise her fortune, to the good work. In November, 1830, the first two postulants arrived, and in a few months they were followed by forty more. The hospital being too small to accommodate so many persons, Signora Nasi, whom Providence had chosen to be the mother of the young Institute, received them into her own house. Their habit was blue; from their necks was suspended a silver heart with the initials S.V. on one side, and on the other the motto "Charitas." Canon Cottolengo

called them the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul; but among the people they were generally known as "Vincentians."

These generous and self-sacrificing women, guided by the wise counsels of their spiritual father and trained under the maternal care of Signora Nasi, earnestly and patiently prepared themselves for the work before them. Martha, in cheerful external work, and Mary, in the quiet repose of contemplation, were the models on which they were formed. In order to preserve in them that purity of soul and body, without which the ministrations of charity and mercy are almost impossible, he prescribes daily Communion to all the members of his religious family; and to promote a closer union between them and our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, he ordered that from daybreak to sunset, they should, two by two in succession, spend an hour in prayer before the tabernacle, thus offering to our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament the homage of perpetual adoration. While he took care that the Sisters should be trained in the rudiments of education, he forbade them the study of mysticism and ascetic theology. "Let my Sisters," he would say, "understand their Catechism well; it will be more than enough for them; loftier speculations might turn their heads, or at the least, be waste of time for them."

The labours of Don Cottolengo and his faithful associate, Signora Nasi, were crowned with success, beyond expectation, and the Vincentian Sisters made rapid strides in the school of self-sacrifice, charity,

and zeal, rendering themselves every day fitter instruments for the execution of the charitable works which were in contemplation. Meanwhile, he divided them into two companies; one was reserved for attendance on the sick in the hospital, the other was sent to Nasi's house, to take charge of a number of poor girls who had been thrown upon his care. He prayed that the Divine blessing might rest upon the rising community; and, by his example, he infused into their hearts his own spirit of zeal and energy. When people spoke in his praise, he was quick to silence them and to find ways of vilifying himself. "Indeed," he would say, "I am the laziest fellow in existence; time hangs on my hand, I do not know what to do with myself;" or, "Friend, come along; let us have a game at cards and then take a drop."

Another class of people commended itself to the warm charity of Cottolengo, and to the indefatigable zeal of his religious Sisters. These were the sick poor who were lying ill in their own homes. The servant of God had often witnessed with grief the distressing sight of sickness accompanied by poverty. Selecting, therefore, from among the Sisters of Volta Rossa, some distinguished for their fervour and spirit of self-denial, he sent them to the houses of the sick poor to minister to their spiritual and corporal wants. They carried with them food, medicines, and articles of clothing; they distributed alms when they were able, and when they had no money to give, they spoke words of comfort suggested by faith and charity.

He also took pains to train his Sisterhood to teach Christian doctrine. "Let these girls," said he, "learn their Catechism well, and obey its teaching, and we need go no further. How consoling for you to impart to children the knowledge of God. Let them begin to love God when young, they will continue to love God to the end of their lives."

Though some particular duty was assigned to every Sister, he was very careful that none should be overburdened with work, or so carried away by excessive zeal as to impair her health. The sickly and delicate were the special objects of his solicitude. "We ought," said he to Dr. Granetti, "to take great care of these Sisters, for they are God's property. They labour for the poor, and in doing so they work for God. If expenses are to be incurred for their benefit, God will provide."

In Volta Rossa he began to give signs of that prophetic spirit which enabled him to foretell future events. He announced the foundation of a convent in the following manner. Some Sisters were wont to enliven their work with songs and canticles. He did not approve of the practice, and gently rebuked them, saying, "Sing not now your songs, spare your voice for the convent. Ten years hence some of you will be cloistered, and then you will sing in the choir to your hearts' content. And you," he added, turning to one of the Sisters who preferred the seclusion of monastic enclosure to the external wards of the hospital, "you shall be among the first to enter it." This prophecy was verified at the time he had named. The Sisters of St. Vincent

often begged him to give them a body of rules by which they might be guided, and by which uniformity of religious life could be secured. "Treasure," he said, "the counsels and directions which from time to time you hear from me. A rule will indeed be written for you, but not for thirty years to come." And so it happened. At different times Madame Nasi was unable to find a sufficient number of night nurses for the wards, the few she had being too weak and sickly for continuous work. "I will find them," he would say, "and provide you with more than you need, and they will feel the better for their labours." He appointed now one, now another Sister, and all those he sent felt better after the night-watch than before.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST TRIALS.

THE little hospital was now fairly started, and progressing favourably. The Canon devoted to it all the time he could spare from other duties. His visits were frequent and regular; morning, noon, and night he went through the wards, inquiring after the patients, listening to their long tales, cheering them with smiles and anecdotes, and imparting to them the consolations of religion. More than this, he gladly helped the workers in every department, and he might be seen dressing wounds, making beds, washing sores, sweeping wards, and performing even the meanest offices. His manner was so winning and gentle that the patients looked on him with admiration, and wherever he went, their blessings followed him. It was often remarked that, at his approach, the hardened and churlish became gentle, tractable, and resigned. At meal-times he used to go to the kitchen to see that that food was well cooked and sufficient in quantity. He used to say: "Do not be sparing in providing for the poor; to economize where they are concerned is an injustice and a robbery. What-

ever we possess belongs to them." Before leaving the hospital, he recited the Rosary with them.

The following is an instance of his simple, pleasant manner of dealing with the inmates of his hospital. A poor blind man was brought in. According to his custom, Canon Cottolengo was at once by his side, attending upon him, and speaking to him of the goodness of God, the joys of Heaven, the glory of the saints. Day after day he repeated his visits to the blind man, who was so much delighted with his conversation, that he ventured to say, "Who are you, who every day talk to me so sublimely of God, the Madonna, and heavenly things?" "Don't you know? I am a cobbler of Piazza d'Erbe" (a name which the holy priest often assumed to conceal his good deeds and silence his admirers); "my trade is to patch old boots and to mend shoes." "Good gracious!" exclaimed the blind man, "if cobblers are so wise and good in this place, what must the director of this institution be! All say he is a saintly man, and I believe them." After a while the Canon asked him whether he was willing to make his confession. "Of course," he answered, "but to no other confessor than to the director." "You wish then to go confession to me?" replied the Canon. "By all means," said the other. "I will confess to the cobbler of Piazza d'Erbe. I suppose in this place cobblers can mend consciences as well as they mend boots and shoes." The Canon walked away, smiling, and when the blind man was told the name of his confessor, he remarked: "I

now understand how the words of that cobbler of Piazza d'Erbe, made so deep an impression upon me."

So far things had proceeded smoothly and prosperously. The hospital seemed to be permanently founded; money had come in, people had been willing to help, the patients had been happy. The Canon was jubilant. But the little Hospital of Volta Rossa was but the beginning of a far greater institution which was to astonish men by its material vastness, the number of its works of charity, and the zeal and sanctity of its Sisterhood. But a change was at hand, and the Canon was to be taught by trial that the work he had initiated was the work of God, Whose steward he was, and that its continuance and success would depend not upon any human aid, but upon the Divine assistance alone. Canon Cottolengo had been chosen to be the apostle of Providence, and Providence was about to test his faith and trust.

The general interest taken in Volta Rossa had diminished, the number of its benefactors had decreased, and donations were becoming scarcer, and the attraction of novelty had worn off; while at the same time applications for admission to the hospital were becoming more numerous. With a larger number of patients, the expenses also became greater, and as bills remained unpaid, the creditors were loud in their complaints. Some refused to furnish any more goods, others went to the hospital and demanded their money. The Canon tried by kind words and fair promises to appease their anger

and gain their good-will, but in vain. "We come here," they said, "for hard cash, not for empty words." "Be patient," he answered, "Providence is my bank, all my capital is there; you need not fear, you will not be losers." But they were not appeased; they hurried with their complaints to Father Fontana, requesting him to use his influence with Don Cottolengo in their behalf, and prevail upon him to give up his mad attempt to do charity to others at their expense, while he gained a reputation for liberality, and they lost their money. "Let him close the hospital," they cried, "and cease to tempt Providence." The good priest, after listening to them patiently, said to them: "Is it not true that nothing is impossible to men of strong faith? Now I tell you, my friends, that there is greater faith in the heart of Canon Cottolengo alone, than among all the inhabitants of our combined city. If he therefore tells you to have no fear about your money, believe him, and go in peace."

But matters did not rest here. New difficulties arose. Some persons of weight and authority, who did not see the light by which Don Cottolengo was guided, and who not unnaturally judged according to the dictates of human prudence, opposed him and his hospital. With all arguments in their power, they tried to induce him to give up an undertaking which seemed to have such small chance of success, and ultimately would prove disastrous to himself and to others. "The scheme was presumptuous and imprudent. Let him be on his guard against misguided charity, imprudent zeal,

and perhaps desire of renown. Let him do good, if he would, but let him tread on the beaten track," they urged. Many, to signify their disapproval and displeasure, broke off their intercourse with him; others, less charitable, made him the butt of their taunts and mockery, speaking openly in disparagement of his person and in condemnation of his scheme. "This Canon Cottolengo," said a friar, whose name I shall forbear to mention, "is a purse-drainer, a plunderer of our people's substance; he imposes on those poor market-folk of Piazza d'Erbe." An irate woman also brought an accusation against the Canon; she accused him of wishing to obtain property which by right belonged to her, and laid her complaint before the Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Columban Chiaverotti.

Canon Louis, who saw that a splendid career was opening before his brother Joseph, did not like to see him wasting his time, as he thought it, with so many poor sick people, and living in the midst of filth and misery. "Close this hospital," he said, "give up this rash concern, provide for yourself. It is in your power to obtain an honourable and lucrative living whenever you like; why linger here to be devoured by vermin? See how these loathsome creatures are running a race along your gown. This is all you get for your trouble." "Poor things," answered he, very gently, "they seem quite at home with me. Let them be so. But to give up my hospital is out of question. You may load me with gold, but you will not be able to tear me away from my poor." Father Albert, his Dominican brother,

also remonstrated with him, condemned his undertaking, and implored him, in his own and in Valletti's name, to abandon a scheme which was the cause of so much unfriendly gossip and of so much trouble to himself and his friends. Don Cottolengo listened very attentively without betraying the least sign of annoyance or resentment; then, with his wonted smile, he answered: "I much regret that Canon Valletti should be annoyed with me, and pained on my account. He is a very good, upright, kind-hearted priest, and if he finds fault with me, it is because he sincerely believes I am in the wrong. I will pray for him. As to yourself, my good brother, be neither troubled nor scandalized; go back to your convent, take a good sleep, you will feel better after it. *Deo gratias;*" and without more words the Canon left him.

Canon Valletti, Rector of the Congregation to which Cottolengo belonged, though very friendly towards him, was far from being at ease. He was alarmed at the number of cares and responsibilities with which he had burdened himself. At first, foreseeing neither opposition nor any other obstacles, he had sanctioned the charitable institution. But now he became discouraged at the changed state of affairs; he was harassed by crowds of his friend's creditors, and he feared that his Congregation might become involved in, or be held responsible for, the debts of one of its members, and he was therefore more inclined to condemn than to uphold the charitable scheme, and would gladly have seen his friend well out of it.

While some persons were endeavouring to make him give up the work of charity so dear to his heart, others assailed his person, and violently attempted his life. An evil-minded man who was enraged against Cottolengo for having received into the refuge at Nasi's house a girl whom he had pursued with evil designs, seeing his prey out of his reach, vowed to take revenge on her preserver. For several nights the man lay in wait for the Canon with intent to murder him. At last, one evening, he sprang upon him as he was coming out of the vestry, and attempted to throttle him. The timely aid of the sacristan, who ran to his rescue, saved his life. Another time, as he was returning from the bedside of a dying man, he felt the strong arms of a ruffian encircling his waist and attempting to bring him to the ground. He screamed for help, and strove to disengage himself from his grasp, when suddenly his assailant, fixing his eyes upon him, and believing he had mistaken his victim, set him free, and falling at his feet, cried out, "I beg a thousand pardons, sir, I thought you were Canon Cottolengo," and disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOSPITAL OF VOLTA ROSSA CLOSED.

For three years the Hospital of Volta Rossa had thrown open its wards to as many sufferers as they could accommodate. Its doom was now sealed. By imperative order of the Piedmontese Government it was to be closed. A letter, dated Sept. 19th, 1831, and signed by Count d'Escarena, Minister of the Home Department, was addressed to Canon Valletti, ordering the hospital to be at once closed, or to be removed outside the city. This order was given in consequence of the complaints of some of the citizens, who disliked the proximity of such a hospital to their homes, the more so as an epidemic was then raging in the surrounding country and threatening to show itself in the city. With evident displeasure and vexation, the Rector communicated the intelligence to the assembled canons, and throwing down the letter before Don Cottolengo, he said: "There, this is what you get for your stubbornness. I gave you timely warning and you would not heed it. Had you followed my advice, you would have spared us this annoyance, and the reputation of our Congregation would not have been endangered."

The Canon listened with his accustomed composure, and smilingly remarked that he had long expected that matters would thus end. "The Hospice of Volta Rossa is too small for its purpose. It must develope and expand. In my country they say that cabbages gain in size and quality by being transplanted. We must change our quarters and look for more spacious grounds." "What," queried some one in amazement, "do you still cling to that hospital scheme? Whom will you put in?" "Why," answered he, "the poor, the cripple, the old, the leper, the forlorn, the sick, all who may apply." "After such a complete failure," retorted another, "I defy you to support a score of them." "I will support thousands of them, if it so pleases God," was the Canon's modest but hopeful reply.

The Hospital of Volta Rossa was no more; but a larger one, better suited for Cottolengo's purpose, had been already founded in his mind. It could not fail, for it rested on the three-fold basis of fervent love for God, boundless confidence in Divine Providence, and warm charity for the poor. Meanwhile he transferred from Madame Nasi's house to the unoccupied rooms of the suppressed hospital, the girls of whom he had charge, and who were soon to be known as daughters of St. Ursula and St. Genevieve. The Vincentian Sisters, now disengaged from hospital duties, were employed in visiting the sick at home, in instructing ignorant children, and in attending to a *crêche* for babies whose parents were out at work. He often bade the good Sisters be hopeful, and prepare themselves

for the duties destined for them by Divine Providence.

As to himself, he had more completely than ever abandoned himself into the hands of Providence, as a little child in the arms of a loving mother. He had no personal interests, no love for worldly pleasures, no craving for wealth, no ambition for earthly renown. He often said to Don Laurence Rinaldi: "I feel loth to meddle in the concerns of life and business. I should like to shrink away from the sight and memory of men. Prayer and solitude are my delight. I would fain be like the little birds that warble their songs, concealed by the foliage of trees."

At the same time, illumined by the Divine Spirit, he understood that a work was laid out before him. He saw it in all its details, and he was ready to undertake it, despite the opposition of his enemies and the counsel of his friends. He was well aware that by many persons he was held to be a weak-minded man, more fitted to be an inmate of an asylum than a director of a hospital. Others endeavoured to convince him that there was no need of another hospital for the city, and that if one was needed, it was beyond his power to establish and support it.

Unshaken by their remonstrances, and trusting in the Divine assistance, he began to look for a place fitted for his design. On the outskirts of the city he found a very convenient spot which answered his purpose well and was safe from objection. It was called Valdocco, a spot lying west of Turin,

and once held in deep veneration by the people as having been bedewed with the blood of two Theban martyrs, St. Aventor and St. Octavius; but at that time profaned by the orgies of a number of the populace, who on certain days in the year flocked thither to indulge without restraint in vulgar and boisterous revels that were not tolerated in the city. The plain of Valdocco stretched to the River Dora, and was studded here and there with thatched hamlets and dilapidated sheds. Before long it was to be beautiful with gardens and avenues, and with many magnificent buildings erected by Divine Providence—hospitals and asylums, chapels and convents, schools and workshops, all refuges where suffering and friendless members of the human family might find a friendly shelter, and where self-sacrificing Christians would bid them welcome and minister to their wants. Valdocco was to become a vast temple consecrated to religion wherein the martyrs of charity and the martyrs of pain, the orphan child and the friendless girl, the veteran soldier and the young virgin, the aged and the imbecile, the penitent and the innocent, would together enjoy the blessings which Divine Providence never ceases to bestow. Within its walls will be found religious communities of both sexes, bound by vows, living under rule, and each having its definite purpose and distinctive habit, some being devoted to silence, prayer, and penance, others to the duties of active charity. What rendered the place more desirable for Cottolengo's work was its proximity to the sanctuary of the

Consolata, a place dear to the people of Turin, who often assembled within its walls to implore the Virgin's protection and to thank her for the favours lavished on them by her maternal love. The servant of God felt that his institution was under the protection of the Mother of Jesus, that it was solidly founded, and that it would succeed and prosper for the spiritual and corporal good of its inmates and to the glory of Divine Providence.

CHAPTER V.

FOUNDATION OF THE LITTLE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE.

THE beginnings of the Piccola Casa (the Little House of Providence) were of a very modest character. Canon Cottolengo rented, on the place described in the preceding chapter, a small cottage consisting of two rooms, an adjoining stable, and a barn. On looking at it he remarked that the undertakings of man might be compared to a pyramid, which, starting from broad foundations, rises into the air and culminates in a point too small to hold even a bird's nest. Not so the works of God. They are like an inverted pyramid; their beginnings are small and imperceptible, but the more they progress, the greater becomes their height, their extent, and their solidity. The cottage and outhouses were hastily repaired and suitably furnished, under the

supervision and with the help of the Canon, and on the 27th of April, 1832, the first patient was carried in by two Vincentian Sisters. Others soon followed, and in such numbers that ampler accommodations had to be provided for their reception. Another house was rented and rooms were prepared for the applicants. Cottolengo's hospital was now fairly instituted, and he called it the Little House of Divine Providence, under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul. On its main door was inscribed in large letters the ninth verse of Psalm lxi.: "Trust in Him all ye congregations of people, pour out your hearts before Him." Its motto was St. Paul's: *Charitas Christi urget nos.*

Being asked why he called his establishment the Little House, he answered: "I call it the Piccola Casa in order to distinguish it from the larger house of Divine Providence, which embraces the whole earth, and I add of Divine Providence to indicate its purpose and nature. For it is not man's house, built by human exertions or supported by human contrivances, but God's house, established, governed, and provided for by Divine Providence; opening its door indiscriminately to every one who seeks in it a shelter. I placed it under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul, because he was a true loving father of the poor. Its device is, *Charitas Christi urget nos,* to remind all who labour in it or offer help, that they must have no other motive before them than to please our Lord Jesus Christ, and that they must expect no reward but from Him."

Meanwhile he was training the Vincentian Sisters

for their future duties in the rising establishment, that they might be fitted to do God's work there. He showed them that the harvest before them was great, and he cheered them with the hope of a glorious reward. "You are but a handful of Sisters at present, and your patients are few, but soon your family shall wonderfully increase, and the inmates of this house shall be numbered by thousands. The land around, as far as you can see, shall be yours, and it shall be covered with comfortable dwellings, to which people will flock to eat the bread of Divine Providence."

The Sisters complained that they were often insulted by beggars and mischievous boys, who called them names, used bad language, and threw stones at their persons and smashed their windows. "Be of good cheer," he answered, "there will soon be a change. On the spot where vulgarity and lawlessness run riot, we shall erect a church; where the sounds of curses and blasphemies are now heard, we shall sing the praises of the Lord."

He spoke in the same strain to those who ridiculed his undertakings and taunted him with presumption, foretelling fresh failures and disappointments. "Mockeries and taunts will give place to rejoicing and blessings," he said to Father Albert, "when you see this plain covered with buildings erected by Providence for works of charity," and pointing in the direction where the Piccola Casa now stands, he added: "The Dora will be the boundary of the institution on the south, on the east it will extend to the Pallone quarters, and the

Church of St. Peter in Vinculis will mark its limits on the west. And mind, this is not my doing, but the work of Divine Providence." The timorous Father, full of misgivings, shook his head and walked away.

The Canon remained at Valdocco to mature his plans, though it could scarcely be said that he had any. His work seemed to grow as it were spontaneously. He was, of course, a man of prayer and reflection, prudent and ready to take counsel. But he rarely sought it from his own lights. God was his architect, he was merely the builder. What he sought to know was God's will. This was his only aim. If he was timid and hesitating before he had ascertained it, he was courageous and determined when he knew that he was really doing the work of his Heavenly Father. He was therefore on the alert to hear every whisper of the Divine Spirit, and as soon as he had heard it, he promptly acted upon it. For instance, if an old man or woman, broken down by hard work, sought hospitality, he took the application to be a Divine message, and at once opened a hospice for old men and women. In the same way, if a deaf and dumb man, or an epileptic, a lunatic, or any one otherwise afflicted, happened to be thrown upon his charity, he would make ready for them a home especially arranged for the treatment of their respective cases. God has sent them, he thought, that he might take care of them. He often said: "They are Heaven-sent, and we must give them a hearty welcome. In the Piccola Casa there is only one Lord with

absolute right to command and countermand, to do and undo. Our duty is to take orders and obey. These poor afflicted people come here with a message from Heaven."

The Piccola Casa was prospering and growing larger. Several of the surrounding houses were bought and fitted up for the reception of invalids. A large tract of land was enclosed and a large new house built upon it. Before long there were to be seen on the plain of Valdocco buildings of various forms and sizes, all bearing the inscription: *Qui confidit in Domino non minorabitur*,[1] and open to receive all who sought the consolations of religion or who claimed the ministrations of charity. Little attention was paid to architecture, Cottolengo's main object in building being to provide for the needs of his fast increasing family. Each building had its distinctive name, such as Home of Faith, Home of Charity, Home of Hope, House of the Madonna, Bethlehem, The Home of God, and so forth, in order that both patients and attendants might be reminded to raise their minds and hearts to God, and thank Him for the blessings He daily lavished upon them.

On the 15th of November, 1832, God was pleased to call to her reward Signora Nasi Pullini, the pious lady who had devoted herself, her house, and her fortune to the service of the poor and the training of the Vincentian Sisters. She piously breathed her last in the hands of Cottolengo, bequeathing her mission to Angela Massia, who for many years had

[1] "He that trusts in the Lord shall not fall short."

witnessed her virtues and shared her labours. Don Cottolengo followed her remains to the grave, and cherished the hope that if he had lost a zealous co-operatrix, and the Sisters a loving mother, they had a helper and intercessor in Heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SISTERS OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

THE Piccola Casa had become an undoubted success, and Canon Cottolengo was its life and prop, the commander, so to say, of this watch-tower of charity, which was garrisoned by his spiritual children, the Vincentian Sisters. They were recruited from all classes, and their training was, as we have seen, fitted to prepare them for the manner of life to which they aspired. "The special devotion of the Sisters," he told them, "consist in saying community prayers well. Afterwards, as if summoned by our Divine Lord to serve Him and seeing Him everywhere, you must go from ward to ward, from house to house, from family to family, on the sweet errands of charity, forgetting yourselves and the ingratitude of men, and regardless of your personal repugnance to come in contact with disease." The Sisters were enjoined to take as their model the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul, and, as far as they could, to emulate their virtues. "Look upon the inmates of the Piccola Casa," he said, "as if they

were your masters and lords, whose servants and slaves it is your happiness to be; be unwearied in ministering to them, and let all your words and dealings with them be kind and gentle, so that, while their bodies are relieved, their souls also may be benefited. True charity must be like a dainty dish, so neatly dressed, that by appealing to the eye, it may whet the appetite."

"The Vincentian Sisters," he added, "must be always on the wing, and with the eyes of faith see under the tattered garments of the poor, in the putrid sores of the sick, in the vacant look of the idiot, the adorable Person of our Lord, Who takes as done to Himself the services which are rendered to His brethren. They must hasten lest they keep Jesus waiting. For when poverty and sickness call, the voice of Jesus Himself summons them. Like faithful sentinels they must never desert their post when on duty, and when called elsewhere they must leave a Sister in charge of the work they vacate. It would be to abandon our Lord, were they to do otherwise. Among the patients in the Home, those whose diseases and wounds are most loathsome, and whose presence is most offensive, should be welcomed with greatest kindness and nursed with greatest compassion; for," as he said, "these are the roses and pearls which Divine Providence drops into your lap."

With strangers and persons in the world, he enjoined that the Sisters should be courteous and simple in manner, and edifying and brief in their conversation, which should not run on the details

of community life or on their labours. When giving advice and instruction he made use of innocent jokes, and he used to say to his spiritual daughters: "If you are questioned about yourselves, do not say that you are Vincentian Sisters and that Canon Cottolengo is your Superior. Be contented to say that you are ignorant blockheads and green cabbages, with as big a blockhead and as green a cabbage for your Superior. Tell the inquirers that you are fond of good wine, and that you can quaff your cups with as much relish as he does." Having noticed a Sister whose slow and awkward ways contrasted with the smart activity of her companions, he said: "There is good stuff in her; if she is slow and blundering, it is not from bad will or malice, but from lack of capacity. She goes to every duty with the best of good-will and gains more merit than many others."

With counsels and directions such as these he trained the minds and hearts of the young women whom he had invited to share his labours, and on whom the most difficult and important functions of the whole institution would soon devolve. Maternity cases and sufferers from insanity were the only classes of physical affliction excluded from the Piccola Casa, to which all other forms of illness and suffering were admitted, without distinction of age, sex, creed, or nationality. "They all bear the image of God; we must open our doors to all," he would say. If ever favour was shown, it was to the most afflicted. "All the patients in the Piccola Casa are our masters," he would say, "but doubly so are

they who are most loathsome and repulsive." Whenever such a one was brought in, Cottolengo received him with head uncovered and with words of welcome, thanking him for the favour conferred on the institution by his choice of it, and for the pleasure of his presence. Having recited an *Ave* with the new patient, and given him his blessing, he would place him in the care of the Sisters with an injunction that he should be well cared for.

The charity of the Piccola Casa was extended in a special manner to vagrant beggars. He looked on these as especially committed to his charge by Divine Providence. "The Piccola Casa was," he said, "the palace which Providence had built for them." But he was careful to exclude from it those who had no claim on the charity of his institute. "They who enjoy the protection of the wealthy and who are otherwise provided for, have a human providence; they need not apply to mine. Here Divine Providence gives a home to those who are denied one by men." Once Don Peter Sola, a Doctor of Divinity and afterwards Bishop of Nice, begged Canon Cottolengo to admit an old man into his hospice.

"I see you are interested in him," remarked the Canon, "and you are taking good care of him." "Of course I am," replied Don Sola, "he is a parishioner of mine and a deserving man." "Very well," rejoined the Canon, with a smile, "continue to take care of him: he has a providence, he needs not ours."

Another time four applicants were in the waiting-

room of the hospital. One of them came with the recommendation of Count Saluzzo, whose valet was in attendance. The other three had no plea for admission save their utter destitution. Cottolengo gave to these three the only three empty beds at his disposal. The Count's valet looked at the Canon in amazement, awaiting an explanation. "Go to the Count, your master," said he, "and tell him that I shall find room for his *protége* when he has exhausted his kindness towards him."

The same reception was given to a patient recommended by a rich lady in the city. "Tell your mistress," he said to her page who brought the sick man, "that there is no room in the Piccola Casa for persons who are blessed with the patronage of wealthy ladies: its wards are only for the friendless and unprotected. You may also add that I am at a loss to understand how such a kind lady should burden others with the nursing of her own dependents."

Such were the lessons given to the Vincentian Sisters, who were fitting themselves for the duties of their vocation. But their probation was not over. In order to ascertain what they were made of, he put them through a severe trial, which lasted nearly three months. At the beginning of June, 1833, he chose twelve from among the rest, and called them, "The Family of the Magdalens." He enjoined on them the most rigorous silence, allowing them no intercommunication except by signs. On four days of the week they observed a strict fast, on the other three days they used only Lenten fare.

In their cells were neither desks, chairs, nor furniture of any kind, save a hard mattress. They spent their time in prayer and penance, and were clothed in a clumsy, coarse, dark serge gown, with a hempen rope for girdle. For head-dress they had a black hood of the same material, and on their feet they wore only wooden sandals. Thus attired they daily went in procession to the parochial church of Borgo Dora, or to that of Corpus Christi, which was a long way off. They had to pass through the most frequented streets of the city, and loafers and mischievous boys improved the occasion by following the Magdalen Sisters with shouts of derision, and pelting them with mud and stones. This daily humiliation, extending over so many months, can be better imagined than described. But the Sisters went through it bravely, and offered to God each night the victory of the day, and prepared themselves for the next day's trial. Satisfied at last with their humility and bravery, he ordered them to prepare themselves for their reward. On the 15th of August, the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, he gave them back the Vincentian habit and allowed them to make the three simple vows of their Institute. Their habit has been described in speaking of Volta Rossa.

Connected with the Vincentian Convent was the Home of the Madonna, in which were received young girls of sound health and good principles, who might be inclined to the religious state. They were called the daughters of the Madonna, and from their ranks the Vincentians were intended to

be in time recruited. About this time also a Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul was instituted, to minister to the wants of the male inmates and attend to the discharge of other duties in the Piccola Casa.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW HOMES.

COTTOLENGO now opened a special hospital for men, with accommodation for two hundred and seventy patients, and put it in the hands of the Brothers of St. Vincent, whom he charged to wait on the sick as if they were waiting on Jesus Christ Himself. "Remember," he said, "that they are your masters, and if you become remiss in your attendance on them, they may dismiss you."

After a while he started hospices for both sexes, placing the one intended for men under the patronage of St. Anthony, and that assigned to women under the protection of St. Elizabeth. In these houses he gathered together the blind, the maimed, and other invalid cases. He called the men sons of St. Anthony, and the women daughters of St. Elizabeth. They lived peacefully, and all their spiritual and temporal wants were well provided for. In order to banish idleness with all its train of evils, he kept them occupied in such manual labours as their strength permitted. When they were too

feeble for work he employed them in prayer. "You cannot work," he said, "you must therefore pray; for prayer is work and a paramount duty in the Piccola Casa." He took great pains with the religious instruction of his patients.

He reserved to himself the treatment of the most difficult cases in his institution, and would take under his special care all desperate characters on whom the Sisters or Brothers of the Piccola Casa had exhausted their patience and charity. A man who had found his way to the Home seemed to have in him more of the brute than of the human being. His huge trunk was without legs, his face was that of a savage, and his whole appearance was hideous to behold. The condition of his soul was in keeping with it; and his violent cursing and heavy blows had frightened every one away from him. The servant of God then took him in hand. He daily approached him with a gracious smile and winning manner, addressed him gently, presented him with such dainties as the man relished, and by degrees secured his good-will and so well subdued his ill-temper, that he obtained perfect control over him, and rendered him as tractable as a lamb.

The paupers and the patients were the choicest treasures of the Piccola Casa, and among them were rare gems of Christian piety and purity, especially among the women. Many of them consecrated themselves to God by vow, and prayed much before the Blessed Sacrament for the Piccola Casa and its inmates. They were called Vincentian Tertiaries, and paid particular homage to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus. During the day they were also engaged in light manual work or in helping in the wards.

The unwearied zeal of Cottolengo soon embraced another class of sufferers. A comfortable Home was provided for those afflicted with chronic and incurable diseases—a class refused admission to many general hospitals. He placed them under the protection of the Blessed Sebastian Valfré, and surrounded them with all the comforts which their condition demanded and charity decreed. Thus their lot was made more bearable; and, cheered by the hope of a happier hereafter, they resigned themselves more contentedly to it.

Soon afterwards a woman who was a victim of epilepsy, and two idiots, asked admittance at the House of Providence. The servant of God welcomed the applicants with his accustomed kindness; and taking it as a sign that they were come with a message from on high, bidding him to have quarters in readiness for them and their fellow-sufferers, he fitted up for epileptics two hospitals, under the invocation of Blessed Amadeus of Savoy, one being for men and the other for women. He soon found himself the guardian of nearly two hundred epileptics, who, if not cured of their malady, enjoyed in their new dwelling all needful bodily comfort and the consolations of religion.

Idiots, too, experienced Cottolengo's charity. Two Homes, one for women and girls, the other for men and boys, were erected for them on the spacious grounds over which the Casa Piccola was extending.

With exquisite delicacy, feeling, as it were, in himself the shame of their degradation, and wishing to prevent whatever might be apt to wound any remnant of sensitiveness still surviving in them, Don Cottolengo forbade them to be called idiots or simpletons, and ordered that they should be termed the *good boys* and the *good girls*. He was full of compassion for them, and spent many hours with them, giving them sometimes fruits and sweetmeats, and amusing them with pleasant stories. Sometimes, even though repaid with grimaces and blows, he would take part in their sports and games, as one of themselves. On one occasion, the Archbishop of Vercelli came to visit the Canon, whom he found to his surprise, playing ball with one of the idiots, called Doro. "I will be at your service, and at your feet, your Grace, in a few minutes," said he; "allow me, my lord, to finish this game with my boy Doro, lest he may be offended if I leave off." The religious instruction of these feeble-minded creatures was by no means neglected. By means of patience and special skill the smouldering sparks of intelligence were in some cases awakened, and it was occasionally found possible to prepare the poor children for the sacraments. He used to call them his pets, and he considered them Heaven-sent gifts. "These idiots," he said, "are my money cheques on the bank of Providence. None more than they draw down God's blessings on the Piccola Casa, for none are more destitute and friendless than they."

In the year 1834 the new hospital for men and

the large and beautiful Church of St. Vincent and St. Anthony were added to the buildings of the Piccola Casa.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEAF AND DUMB AND THE ORPHANS.

THE deaf and dumb next called for the attention of Cottolengo. "Behold," he says, "a crowd of missionary priests cross the ocean to distant countries to bring the light of faith to pagans and infidels, and we have in our midst these wretched deaf and dumb, cut off from all Christian instruction and in utter ignorance of God and religion, yet no provision is made for them." As he was musing on their deplorable condition, a girl, who had been deaf and dumb from birth, made her way to the Piccola Casa. He took this as a sign and message from Heaven, and instantly set himself to execute it. Having rented a convenient house, he established in it two asylums, one for deaf and dumb boys, under the invocation of our Lord, the Healer of the deaf man, the other for girls, under the patronage of St. John Baptist, at whose birth speech was restored to Zachary.

The Deaf and Dumb Institute at Genoa, established by Father Assarobbi, supplied him with teachers alike for the boys, the girls, and the Vincentian Sisters, to whose care the children were given. The progress of all was no less wonderful

than consoling. The lessons taught were in keeping with the condition of those who were admitted to the institute, and enabled them to understand the truths of religion and to earn an honest living. They were divided into three classes. Those who were intellectually gifted were put through a higher course of studies, and taught some liberal art. Others who were slow in learning were trained in some mechanical craft. Others again who were too feeble-minded for any intellectual occupation, were kept at manual labour in the establishment. The Venerable Servant of God was warmly attached to them all, and he was careful to attend to their spiritual and temporal welfare. He visited them almost daily, and having mastered their alphabet of signs, would hold conversations with them. He so fully gained their affection that whenever he appeared on their playground, they would crowd around him with manifestations of joy and gratitude. Every Sunday a special service was held for them in the chapel, and the Gospel truths explained to them by signs and gestures.

The change that took place, especially among the women of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, was wonderful, and people were much edified by the fervour of their piety, the regularity of their lives, and the gentleness of their manners. Gladdened by this satisfactory result, the venerable man of God made a remark which proved prophetic. "They neither hear nor speak," said he, "but soon many of them will be under vows and serve God in the retirement of a convent." His prediction was

verified, for, after his death, a community of these speechless nuns, consecrated to the blessed heart of Mary, was established in the Piccola Casa, and continues to flourish to the present day. They had charge of the altar-linen, of the church vestments, and of other matters pertaining to the religious service. They offered their good works for the conversion of pagans and idolaters and for the welfare of the missionaries engaged in it. This convent is one of the brightest spots in the Piccola Casa, and many Sisters have left within its silent walls a precious record of heroic virtues.

Orphano tu eris adjutor[1]—"To the orphan Thou wilt be a helper." The Venerable Cottolengo was one day meditating on this verse, and he asked himself this question, "Shall I not also be a father to these friendless orphans, to these helpless foundlings, to these little waifs and incipient criminals?" He was not slow to answer in the affirmative. With his wonted activity and unshaken confidence in God, he at once began to build them a Home, and two orphanages were soon in readiness for them, one for boys, under the patronage of St. Joseph, the other for girls, under the patronage of St. Anne: while there were workshops for training the lads in handicrafts and teaching the girls needlework of all kinds. All these children received a good elementary education, and were well instructed in the truths of religion.

Having provided for the orphans, he turned his

[1] Psalm x. 14.

attention to a perhaps still more wretched class, namely, the children of bad or negligent parents, the little street arabs, who from their earliest years were often trained to vice in haunts of sin and shame.

Full of grief at the sight of the dangers to which they were exposed, and yearning to save as many of them as possible from a life of guilt, Cottolengo founded three Homes for their shelter. One, called the Little Friars, or *Fratini*, was for boys; the other two, the Homes of St. Ursula and St. Geneviève, were for girls. The boys were educated and trained in crafts according to their gifts, many of them became skilled workmen, and a smaller number, who had vocations, either to the religious or the ecclesiastical state, were allowed to enter the Vincentian Brotherhood or to join the *Tomasini*, a religious body connected with the Piccola Casa.

The girls found a protection in the Home of St. Ursula, under the care of the Vincentian Sisters, where they generally lost their bad habits, began to lead good lives, and became skilful in all domestic duties.

The Home of St. Geneviève was reserved for the incorrigible girls who could not be managed at St. Ursula's and had to be expelled from the company of the others. Here, as in a sort of reformatory, they lived under severe discipline, and had to do hard work. If they became penitent and tractable, as was often the case, they were allowed to return to St. Ursula's.

Such is a short sketch of the origin and progress of the Piccola Casa. The vastness of the undertaking, the variety of its charitable institutions, the number of its inmates, and the order and cheerfulness which everywhere prevailed, excited universal admiration. A renowned French writer said, after inspecting the Piccola Casa throughout: "I have seen in Turin what I had never seen elsewhere in any part of Europe, *a University of Christian Charity*."

CHAPTER IX.

COTTOLENGO AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

In order to understand the greatness and beauty of the Piccola Casa, built by the Venerable Cottolengo, we must make ourselves acquainted with its characteristic as an Institute of Charity. This characteristic was the strong faith in Divine Providence which animated its founder. The Piccola Casa was the house of Divine Providence, wherein God dwelt, and verified His word that none who truly trust in Him shall depart empty handed, and that the Heavenly Father Who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, feeds and clothes His children who apply to Him with simplicity and faith.

Now the faith of Venerable Cottolengo in God's providence over the Piccola Casa could not be greater than it was. Nothing could come from his

fortune, for he had none; nothing from his parents, for they could not afford to help him; nothing from his friends, for he dared not annoy them by begging for the institution; nothing from his own talents, for they were not great. According to his own estimate of himself, he was fit only to be a cobbler and patch old shoes. He totally lacked self-confidence. "I understand," Father Albert once said, "that all your earnings and revenues find their way to the Piccola Casa." "You are mistaken," was the answer, "the Piccola Casa has no revenues save what kind Providence vouchsafes to send. I have nothing whatsoever to do with its support. This is God's work, not mine. Were I to drop a penny of my own into its treasury, I fear it would crumble into ruin." "I take so little trouble about the Piccola Casa," he said another time, "that when I go away from it, I do not give it a thought."

It happened on a certain occasion that the pious institute was in pressing difficulties and great distress. His friends hurried to the Canon's assistance with advice and suggestions. He should proceed with caution, they said, he should not go on so fast. Let him provide against sudden ruin by lessening the number of the patients and satisfying the claims of his creditors. His schemes were too vast, and far beyond his power of execution. But such remonstrances had no effect on Cottolengo. "Hush, hush," he answered them, "I can neither retrace my steps nor interrupt my work. *Charitas Christi urget me.* A powerful hand impels me forward, I cannot stop." To others he

would say: "Far from having on my hands too many to provide for, I have too few. They must be numbered, not by hundreds, but by thousands. The Piccola Casa is not large enough; with God's blessing it must extend to the banks of the Dora." At other times he would remark: "As to myself, I should not be able to keep even one of these poor people. Look at these few coppers, they are my whole patrimony. But Providence is rich, and will provide for these and for many more. Is it more difficult for God to support a thousand than a hundred?" Nothing was oftener on his lips than such expressions as these: "Confidence in God's providence;" "God will provide;" "We must trust in God;" "We are all the children of the Heavenly Father;" and the like. Father Albert, his brother, once proposed that he should use his influence with his numerous friends to obtain donations from the wealthy aristocracy of the city. "Away with you," answered he, in a tone of vexation; "do not be a stumbling-block in my way with your counsels. You do not know what you are saying." Again, when he was conversing with a gentleman about the affairs of the Piccola Casa and its poverty, and was advised to refuse any further applicants, he said with a smile: "I know a surer remedy than that; I know the cause of our penury, and I will remove it. There is in the Piccola Casa a room as yet unoccupied. I must not waste this space:" and forthwith he ordered ten beds to be put in the room, and filled them with as many patients.

Nothing ever disturbed his serenity. It mattered little to him that he was severely tried or in pinched circumstances, or opposed by men, or on the brink of failure; he never lost his cheerfulness and brightness. "I need money," he would say. "If I had a few thousand francs they would not come amiss. Even St. Vincent de Paul was glad when his purse was full; but I never knew or read that he cried when it was empty; why should I cry and fret? Providence will not fail us." When hardly pressed and driven, as it were, to the wall, and seeing no way by which he could extricate himself from his embarrassment, he never complained or showed the least sign of discouragement. "We shall come out all right," he said. "Providence delays her supplies, not because she ignores our wants or is unwilling to help us, but because either our confidence is weak, or our consciences are guilty. There is nothing I dread more than that mortal sin should come between us and Divine Providence." When unusual straits and troubles seemed to test his confidence in Providence, he would trust in it even more blindly, saying: "If God rewards an ordinary confidence with ordinary gifts, He must reward extraordinary confidence with extraordinary gifts." The infirmary for women, which contained more than a hundred beds, was the outcome of one of these pious impulses of Don Cottolengo. At that time he was penniless, and had little prospect of human assistance. After having spent the night in prayer, he went out in the morning in heavy rain to the grounds he had chosen, traced with his

walking-cane the dimensions of the building, and ordered one of the labourers to mark the site by breaking the ground with his spade. "I defy all the powers of men," he said, "to hinder me from raising this building."

"Be strong in faith," he said to the Vincentian Sisters, "pray with confidence, and your eyes will see marvels. You now eat brown bread, soon you will have plenty of *Grissini;* your wardrobes are at present scantily furnished, soon they shall be abundantly filled."

When harassed by creditors, he would feel heart-broken at his inability to satisfy them and at the annoyance they suffered, but he never had any misgivings. "This is only a passing trial," he would say, "and we shall come out of it victorious. When we are hardly pressed we must knock the louder at the door of Divine Providence. Nor must we be satisfied with words, we must come to deeds and admit scores of poor suffering people into our infirmaries. When God sees them pouring in, He will come in too." That it might be so, he would, on such occasions, spend the silent hours of the night prostrate on the ground of his cell in prayer.

The simplicity of his faith calls for notice. His aim was to do good and all the good he could, to do it in the kindest way and to as many as possible, without ever concerning himself as to the means with which he should accomplish it. The means were God's affair, with which he dared not interfere. Hence he never kept any accounts of the money and goods that came in or were dispensed. There

were, therefore, in the Piccola Casa no registers of expenditure, receipts, and the like. Whenever alms were contributed, he thanked the donors, but refrained from entering them in any book, or even from ascertaining the amount of the sums given. "How foolish and shocking a thing for men to constitute themselves the accountants of Divine Providence," he said; "He knows better than we do, how to keep His own accounts. It is enough for us to work for God, to bless Him for what we get, and place in Him all our confidence. I keep only the record of my indebtedness, which, I am sure, Providence will settle more satisfactorily than any bank in the world could attempt to do. Indeed I once began to keep a register, but the pen dropped from my hand." Neither did he care to know the number of patients in the different hospices, and bade the Sisters check their curiosity and refrain from ascertaining it. "Even if there is no vain-glory in inquiring, there is surely loss of time. This inquiry would be an improper interference with matters pertaining to Divine Providence. Make room for every applicant who has a claim on your charity, let there not be a corner of the Piccola Casa unoccupied, and seek nothing more. Once I was counting the Sisters, as they went two and two to the church, but a hard thump in my ribs made me give it up."

In this simple faith in Providence, we see the secret of the extraordinary success which crowned all the undertakings of the servant of God. God was ever with him, so no wonder that he was

extricated from all difficulties, supplied with means to execute his designs, and always promptly helped according to his needs.

In the year 1835, a woman who was recovering from an attack of cholera-morbus, was admitted into the house. By an oversight, the precautions for disinfection were overlooked, and some of the inmates were attacked by the disease. Dr. Granetti, by whose vigilance the epidemic had been so far averted, was made aware of the fact, and going to Cottolengo in some vexation, cried out: "The epidemic has entered our premises. All my precautions have been rendered unavailing. It was unwise to admit that woman. If the infection spreads, what shall we do? There is no provision made for such an emergency; we have no house for infectious cases, no isolation-ward, and no nurses; we are in a grave difficulty." The Venerable Cottolengo looked at him with a smile, and replied: "Why are you so upset, my good doctor? Be calm and keep quiet. Have you lost faith? Has Providence nothing to do in this case? Go to your patients, and let God provide." Taking his hat he walked about six hundred yards from the Piccola Casa in the direction of a house called *Brentatore*, which was used as a tavern or low pleasure-resort, and was often the scene of riot and revelry. The holy man had long had his eye on this place, intending to add it to his establishment, and in his heart had already taken possession of it, in the name of Providence. It was now time to take possession of it in reality. He sought the owner,

offered a good price for the building, with all its furniture and provisions, and when the bargain was concluded, the house was vacated and made ready for the cholera patients. As soon as everything was in order, he sent word to the medical man to be at ease, for a Lazaretto was at his disposal, fully furnished with beds, nurses, medicines, and whatever else was needed for such an infirmary. He called it the House of Hope.

Another time the Superior of the Vincentians told him anxiously and with no lack of words, that they were in extreme want of necessaries for immediate use, and had only twenty francs on hand. "Where is the money?" asked Cottolengo. She handed him the money, a shining gold piece, which she had carefully wrapped in paper and hidden in her bosom. Going to the window, he threw it out with all his strength, and it was lost in the grass of the field. "And now," added he, addressing the astonished Sister, "do not fret because you are poorer than before. We shall soon have a good sum." In the evening there was left at the gate a large sum of money, more than sufficient to provide for the pressing need.

CHAPTER X.

DON COTTOLENGO'S CONDUCT IN REGARD TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

PRAYER is the key that opens to us the treasury of God's graces and renders us pliant instruments in His hands. Don Cottolengo's prayer was constant and fervent. It was the daily bread on which he lived, and from which he derived strength. While the inmates of the Piccola Casa slept at night, he often spent long hours in prayer, begging Providence to supply the needs of the morrow. A peculiar feature of his prayer was that he never asked for anything in detail or petitioned for any definite thing; his prayer was for all good in general. "Let us ask," he said, "to become saints; let us ask for the Kingdom of God, that God's will and pleasure be done; and we shall be replenished with the good things of God, and float on a sea of blessings. God knows our wants and is willing to come to our aid. Let us trust in His goodness; let us put no obstacle to His graces, and our hearts will be filled with them. Let other people pray as they like, I feel inspired to pray in this manner."

He had no use for safes or cash-boxes, or account-books; for with him money went out as fast as it

came in. He was careful to dispose before night of any sum that he had received during the day. "The supplies which Providence sends to-day," he said, "are for to-day, not for to-morrow; we shall get for to-morrow our provisions in due time." If he had any ready money he would make wholesale purchases of necessaries, but he would never save money. "I once had some money by my bedside," he said, "but it made such a terrible rattle on my desk that it kept me awake, and I was obliged to remove it." He desired the Sisters, whose duty it was to make the daily distribution of food, to be guided by this rule, and he would reprimand them if, for economy's sake, they set things aside for the next day. "We are poor," he said, "living at the expenses of Providence; we must be satisfied with our daily allowance, without misgivings about the future."

Some cheese and sausages were once sent to the Piccola Casa by a benefactor, to be distributed among the inmates of one of the Homes. After giving a liberal allowance to each, the Sister in charge saved some for the next day. When he heard of it, he rebuked her severely, and bade her distribute the remainder immediately, reminding her that those provisions were sent for the present day, not for the next. To another Sister, who had been guilty of the same fault, he said: "You have done wrong, your saving of to-day will bring us fasting to-morrow; you have mistrusted Providence, and we shall fare poorly to-morrow." On that day the provisions were very scanty.

Though he had ordered that the members of the different Homes should be abundantly supplied with food and raiment and comfortably lodged, and though he was always ready to incur debts for their sake, he would not allow any one to be attached to money or be possessed of any. "The Piccola Casa," he said, "will always be prosperous as long as it remains poor, but it will begin to decline if ever revenues are assigned to it. The House of Providence must be the house of poverty. Whatever comes in must be dispensed without delay. What remains over and above our daily expenditure must be distributed among poor families outside the Homes, or be employed in making more room inside for other poor people."

He disapproved of and forbade economy and stint wherever his poor were concerned. They were the friends of God, and therefore entitled to liberal treatment, no less than if they were princes of the land. At times, being compelled to absent himself from the Piccola Casa on pressing business, he would leave Canon Louis in his place. Giving him a purse, he would say: "Treat my poor with the utmost liberality, draw from this money-bag as much as you need for the daily expenses, but remember, always give and never reckon how much you give." And, to his surprise, Don Louis always found plenty of money in it, though the purse was often emptied by numerous calls for assistance.

It often happened that the Sisters at the head of their respective Homes complained to him that their stores were almost empty, and begged for fresh

supplies of necessaries. "I am glad of it," he would reply, "go back and hasten to give away whatever you have left. The sooner your stores are empty, the sooner Providence will replenish them." And he was never disappointed in his expectations.

When at home, the Venerable Canon was the life and soul of the Piccola Casa, issuing orders, receiving reports, making arrangements, and superintending the whole establishment, but as soon as he went out one would have thought that he was a stranger to it, without a particle of interest in it. When he was not there, then "Divine Providence will have full charge of it." One day he had made arrangements with Canon Renaldi to visit the Rector of the church in Collegno, which was a few miles distant. On his way he distributed whatever money he had about him, to some of the beggars who never failed to follow him; and then taking two or three bounds into the air, a favourite practice of his, he showed his empty hands to Renaldi, saying: "Look, all the money of the Piccola Casa has gone. There is no sugar in the store-room, no flour for the bakers, but I am out of it now, it is no concern of mine. It is now the care of Providence." On his return he showed his companion a handful of gold pieces, received from a wealthy gentleman, the Rector's guest, and on reaching home, having asked the Sisters whether they had suffered want of anything, he was informed that they had had plenty. "Do you not see," he remarked to Canon Renaldi, "that Providence is always watchful and kind?"

Another time, as he was getting into the stage-

coach to escort some Sisters to the city of Cherasco, Sister Crescentina begged for some money of which she had urgent need. "I have scarcely enough for our journey," he answered. "But you know where to get it. Be a good girl and ask Divine Providence for it." He had scarcely left, when a stranger left with the portress two heavily-laden bags of gold, so heavy indeed that she could hardly lift them.

The servant of God earnestly impressed upon all persons both inside and outside the Piccola Casa, that their eyes and hearts should be turned to God and not to him, and that they should expect everything from God and nothing from him. Unlike a certain class of people, who indeed labour much for the glory of God, but are very loud in advertising their good works, he never spoke about himself, or referred to himself as having had any hand in planning or executing his important undertaking. He did not say, "*I* did or contemplated such a thing;" but, "Such a thing was done," or, "Such a thing is contemplated," or, "Such seems to be God's pleasure," or, "It has pleased Providence to order so-and-so."

That this might be better understood by others, he used to point to a large beautifully framed gold medal of the Swiss canton of Berne, hanging on the wall of his room, and say: "Look at the motto, *Deus providebit;* it shows whence our help comes, to Whom we have recourse, and in Whom we trust. The bear, on the reverse side of the medal, is an image of myself, a mere tool in the hands of God, to do His holy work."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW HE PROMOTED A SPIRIT OF CONFIDENCE IN OTHERS.

Canon Cottolengo was unwearied in his endeavours to impress on the minds of all connected with the Piccola Casa that they were to rely on no one but on Providence. As children receive all the necessaries of life from their parents, so they were to receive all their spiritual and temporal gifts from the liberality of their Heavenly Father. They were to consider that all the wretched sufferers who applied for charity to the Piccola Casa had been led there by the hand of God Himself, Who would send whatever was needful for their support. He gave his spiritual children to understand that the institution relied on no regular patrons or benefactors among the wealthy aristocracy of Turin or on any member of the Royal Family. "We receive," he said, "our supplies only from the stores of Heaven and from the hands of God. Men are mere channels which convey them to us. It is not becoming in us to wonder at any extraordinary display of His goodness, for God is ever good and bountiful in all things great and small." To satisfy people who were anxious to know the secret of his

success and of the abundant provisions with which the house was filled, he said: "I have neither patrons nor friends among men, nor do I need any. God alone suffices to us, He is our sole bountiful provider, Whose tool I am. The Piccola Casa has need of no one when I shall be gone, it will prosper even better than it does now."

Being actuated by this spirit of confidence, which he unceasingly strove to communicate to others, he never rejoiced when large legacies were left to the institution; sometimes he refused them, and when he accepted them he did so only to dispose of them immediately, either in buying necessaries, in erecting new buildings, or in paying old debts. But he was firm in refusing fixed and regular revenues. "To endow the Piccola Casa with revenues would be to bind God's hands," he would say.

Calm and trustful when God's gifts came scantily as when they were showered down abundantly, he exhorted all in the Piccola Casa to a like unvarying confidence, reminding them that the greater their needs the nearer to them was Divine Providence. Never would he allow a murmur to disturb this peaceful abandonment of souls into the hands of God. He condemned also, as a mark of want of faith, all over-anxiety about the future and all worry about the present. "Be like little children," he used to say, "in the home of your Heavenly Father; He knows what is good for you. By being disquieted and fretful you slight His power and His goodness."

He impressed upon his spiritual daughters that this exercise of confidence should extend to all the most minute details of their lives, to domestic as well as to civil matters; to public as well as to private events. They were to be always ready to die or to live, provided they were working in God's service. The following incident will show that this spirit had taken a firm hold of the hearts of the Vincentian Sisters. Don Cottolengo was going to choose from among them a small number to nurse the cholera-stricken patients of Voghera. Sister Henrica, an invalid, who for many months had not been able to stand, was among those who volunteered for the work, and with this end she joined the assembled community, carried on the arms of her companions. "Poor Sister Henrica," said he, "how do you expect to nurse the sick, while you cannot stand? Rather than nurse to others, you need one for yourself." "Never mind, Father," she replied, "if you will send me it will be well with me and I shall be able to do my work; God will help me." "God will help you? Such is your hope? Go then in the name of God, with His blessing and mine." She started with the rest, gave her services to the plague-stricken, and never enjoyed better health in her life. Such was the effect of his fervent words and edifying example. To look at him or converse with him was enough to fill any one with holy emulation, and every one in the Piccola Casa used to say in emergencies: "It does not matter what happens, the apostle of holy confidence is with us."

He infused the same spirit into the hearts even of externs connected with the Piccola Casa. Joseph Copasso, a bricklayer by trade, a man much beloved by the Venerable Canon for his rare piety and honesty, had done nearly all the brick work of the new buildings and the restoration of the old. A sum of more than seventy thousand francs was owing to him; but notwithstanding this unpaid debt, Copasso was never loth to give his services to the Piccola Casa, for he had the most implicit faith in the promise of the Venerable Cottolengo, that Providence would never fail him. For the servant of God had often told him that he would never be a loser by working for him, or suffer any annoyance from his own creditors. "Your creditors," he said, "are in God's hands as well as you yourself are and as I am. If I am called to Heaven before settling my accounts, be sure that Canon Anglesio will settle them better than I can do. For a special Providence hovers over this house, and a special blessing is reserved for all those who labour for it." "My friends," said Copasso, "advise me to stop working for Don Cottolengo; but he is a man according to the heart of God, and if I possessed half a million, I would not hesitate to place it at his disposal."

The following incident may show how well grounded was such confidence. One day, towards dusk, Copasso called on the Canon, to ask for some money, for on the morrow he had to pay his men, and he was short of four thousand francs. "My good fellow," said the Canon, "how can I satisfy

you when there is not a franc in the whole house? But keep quiet, go home, take a sound sleep, and trust in Providence." "Of course," said the bricklayer, "we must rely on Providence, but how do you expect me to take a sound sleep, whilst to-morrow my workmen will be clamouring for their money? And mind, Canon, I have no more money in my hands than in my eyes." "So it is with me," answered the Canon, "but go in peace and do not worry yourself. To-morrow morning before six o'clock something may turn up." The good man went home with his mind full of misgivings and his purse empty, and thoughtfully sat down to supper. Suddenly as torrents of rain poured down, he was startled by a loud knock at the door, and by a well-known voice crying out: "To-morrow morning, before six, I will bring you two thousand francs, and So-and-so will bring as many more." The voice was from an old debtor of his, whom he had long since given up as insolvent.

Among the creditors of the Piccola Casa was Joseph Defilippi, the head carpenter. Being in want of money he asked for some on account. "My good friend," said Cottolengo, "I can give you more patience than money, for of the latter we have none at present. But Providence will help you." The carpenter persisted in his demand. "Now, go in peace," said the Canon, "like a good fellow, keep quiet and do not tempt Providence." Defilippi, full of spite and vexation, walked home. But he had only been there a few minutes when a gentleman, for whom he had worked, and who was

going into the country, dropped in to settle his account, anticipating the time fixed in the agreement. And in like manner a second and a third stepped in for the same purpose, so that Defilippi found himself with more money than he needed to meet all his calls. "Don Cottolengo," he muttered to himself, "is a saint and a prophet. Henceforth I will be entirely at his disposal."

CHAPTER XII.

THINGS UNPLEASANT AND PLEASANT.

We must not imagine that Canon Cottolengo, because of his extraordinary trust in Divine Providence, was always sailing on smooth waters. On the contrary, he often encountered rough seas and stormy winds. Speaking to a confidential friend about his trials and afflictions, he said: "God, Who is so wonderfully wise and good in His counsels and works, purifies me in the crucible of tribulations and places me on the rack of suffering, which is hard to endure, even though it neither touches my person nor imperils the existence of the Piccola Casa. But such trials are merciful visitations of His love, gentle caresses of His loving hand, and I feel perfectly resigned and contented. The anger of my creditors is aroused against me by the malice of the evil spirits. All this trouble would, I am sure, cease, were I to dis-

continue some prayers that are daily recited in the Homes, but they shall not be discontinued, happen what may. Let us suffer and wait God's pleasure."

This anguish of soul and trouble of heart did not appear outwardly. They were veiled under his constant smile, and silenced, as it were, by his amusing jokes. He was nevertheless closely pressed: on the one hand by over-anxious, noisy creditors, clamouring for their money, which he was not always able to pay; on the other hand he was irresistibly impelled to purchase more land, to erect larger houses, and to make room for more works of charity. He said to some of his spiritual friends, "Woe to me, were I to act otherwise than I do. If I try to change my course, I feel my heart racked by the pangs of remorse; if I keep on my way, my creditors pursue me. Even the inmates of the various Homes, the sick and the sound, the poor and the Sisters, seem to point at me and denounce me as a deceiver and impostor. But all this comes to me with God's permission, and I will submit to it."

He was several times summoned before the tribunal of the Archbishop; his deeds of charity spoken of by his accusers with insulting sneers; dishonourable insinuations were made against him, and selfish motives were imputed to him. The more humble and gentle he was, the more clamorous and rude they became. After all, they said, he was nothing but an uncultivated priest, meddling with everything in order to gain esteem and notoriety. If he wants to do good, they added,

let him do it out of his own purse, without robbing honest artisans and industrious tradesmen. Such was the treatment to which he was subjected and the language he was compelled to hear. But he never lost patience. Sometimes when he was abused, he would humbly stand with head uncovered, listening patiently, and then dismiss the offender, saying kindly: "God bless you, my son, I bear you no ill-will." At times he smoothed the clamorous anger of his creditors with words of hope, bidding them trust in Providence, and assuring them that they would soon get their money and suffer no loss. "Indeed," he said, "you may often be cheated when you serve the great and wealthy of this world, but you will never miss a penny dropped into the bank of God for the benefit of the poor." Others he would appease by saying, "Be of good cheer, you and your family will share in the blessings that a special Providence has in store for the Piccola Casa." Others again he would endeavour to put off with some witty joke. "Have you been to Mass this morning?" he asked one of his creditors. "You have not? That is bad for you, for if you had, I might perhaps be now able to satisfy your demands." To another he said, "Of course I am your debtor, and I am willing to pay my debt. But, look here, my friend, have you been to your Easter duties this year? You have not? How do you expect then that I should settle my accounts with you when you have not settled your account with God?"

Whilst thus harassed from without he reaped a

rich harvest of consolations at home. "God is working wonders in favour of the Piccola Casa, and He will do so for many years to come," he once said to Don John Milano. Indeed scarcely a day passed without bringing visible signs of the Divine goodness in favour of the Piccola Casa. Of this we will give a few instances. "We have not a loaf of bread in the house," said Sister Dominic to the Canon, "our girls must go without their breakfast this morning." "What did the girls say? did they grumble?" he asked. "They did not grumble, but their appetite is none the less keen." "Very well, Providence will send them a breakfast," and he withdrew to pray, and soon afterwards there was found in the alms-box at the gate sufficient money to buy them all the bread they needed.

Sister Petronilla once came to him with a similar complaint as to the scarcity of wine, the casks being empty. "Providence will fill them, be not faint in faith," he answered. Half an hour had scarcely passed when several wagons, carrying huge barrels, entered the courtyard, the drivers unloaded their wagons and went their way, leaving the barrels at the Piccola Casa without saying whence they came.

One of the Sisters, who was engaged in the kitchen, one day informed the Canon that the pans of soup were boiling on the fire, but that there was neither bread nor rice nor any other thing to put in the soup. As usual he went to his room, giving orders to be left undisturbed. After a while a

stranger called to see him. As no one dared to intrude on his retirement, the stranger was offered a cup of coffee, while awaiting his leisure. When going away he put five hundred francs in the hand of the Sister, remarking that "the coffee of the Piccola Casa was exquisitely good and must command a good price."

It once happened that at dinner-time there was little to put before the members of the Canon's big family. Providence was not slow to feed the hungry. A regiment of Royal Artillery had been out all day at drill in Campo di Marte, and, on their return to their quarters, they found savoury soup ready for dinner. Having that day already dined well as the guests of their officers, they did not want the meal awaiting them. They sent it therefore to the Piccola Casa. The inmates rejoiced, and cried out: "Providence has a kind care of us."

CHAPTER XIII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND THE PICCOLA CASA.

We shall in this chapter give some instances of God's providential interference in the concerns of the Piccola Casa, to which Canon Cottolengo had devoted his life. It will interest the reader to see how his faith and confidence were constantly rewarded, and how manifestly God blessed His servant and the large family of the destitute and suffering entrusted to his charity.

Don Cottolengo had been summoned by one of his creditors to appear before the archiepiscopal tribunal. On the day appointed he was about to go to court, when two strangers from Aosta came to see their daughters, who had joined the Vincentian Sisterhood, and gave them a considerable sum of money, the first instalment of their dowry. The two girls hastened to the Venerable Canon with the money, which, when counted, was found to be exactly the amount owing to the discontented creditor. The Canon sent it to him through a messenger, and blessing God Who had delivered him from such an annoyance, went about the ordinary duties of the day.

A grocer who had for some time furnished the house with pastry and vermicelli, sent in his bill, and soon afterwards called himself, for the money. Receiving nothing but courteous words and fair promises instead of the gold and silver he expected, he flew into a violent passion, and losing all control over himself, showered down on the penniless Canon a storm of the vilest epithets. Early next morning the man returned, and on seeing him the Venerable Cottolengo made ready for a new storm of abuse and insults. But his creditor was completely altered. He was cheerful and respectful, apologized for his rude behaviour on the previous day, and thanked the Canon for the promptitude and delicacy with which he had settled his accounts. Don Cottolengo remained silent, lifted up his eyes to God, and blessed Divine Providence for having come to his assistance, but he never could ascertain who had paid his debt to the grocer.

A man, who had a bill owing to him at the Piccola Casa, and who was determined to get it paid at any cost, entered the Canon's room and threateningly demanded his money. The gentleness and humility of the debtor had no effect on the passionate creditor. Seeing that he was put off with words instead of coin, he enforced his claims by displaying a huge knife which he had carried concealed under his cloak. At this sight Cottolengo stepped back, and drawing his right hand from his coat-pocket, drew out also to his surprise a heavy roll of gold pieces. How it had

found its way there, he could not tell, but he was sure he had never put it there. He handed it to his creditor, who on breaking the paper to count the money, allowed a gold piece to fall on the floor. Strange to say, after the money was counted, the gold piece that had accidentally dropped out, was found to be over and above the amount of the bill. When Sister Telesphora came to his room the Canon, still pale with fright, told her to pick up the gold piece and preserve it devoutly, for it was a miraculous coin sent by Providence.

It once happened that the inhabitants of the Piccola Casa, after having endured a fortnight of privations at home, and of vexations from without, were sad and dejected. Don Cottolengo, as was his wont under such circumstances, locked himself in his room, giving orders to be left undisturbed. He had been absorbed in prayer for more than four hours, when the portress, to rid herself of the importunity of a stranger who had come from a great distance to see the servant of God, knocked at his door and delivered the message. The stranger walked in, saluted the Canon very reverently, and placing a large sum of money in his hands, went off, without even leaving his name.

The baker of the Piccola Casa, a man of sound faith and edifying piety, had supplied the establishment with provisions to the value of eighteen thousand francs. He often asked for his money, but seldom obtained any; and was generally obliged to return to his shop empty handed, having heard words such as these: "Be patient," "Trust in

Providence," "Do not lose your peace." But with such words, consoling as they might be, he could neither meet his creditors nor acquit himself of other obligations. Filled with misgivings, he was musing on his sad condition, when a gentleman came into his shop, inquired what was his bill for the Piccola Casa, counted the money, eighteen thousand francs, and went off, leaving the receipted bill with the honest baker, whom he requested to give it to Don Cottolengo.

A woman, named Gallina, to whom Cottolengo owed a thousand francs, was hard pressed for money, which she needed in order to stock her shop, and he had no money to give her. "My good woman," he said to her, "betake yourself to the church and pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to send us help, for we are in great distress." While she was kneeling before the Lady altar, the poor-box was opened and three rolls of gold coin were found in it containing each fifty gold pieces. The good woman preserved that money as a relic, and when compelled by necessity to dispose of some of it, she used to kiss it reverently, saying: "This money came down from Heaven."

The Venerable Servant of God once promised a baker who supplied the Homes with bread and flour, that he would the next day himself bring the money to his shop, though he hardly knew how and where to procure it. But he must make good his promise. Early in the morning of the appointed day, he called on a rich gentleman, by whom he was held in great esteem, and begged for

the loan of three thousand francs. "I will lend you the money if you condescend to sit at breakfast with me," was the gentleman's prompt answer. The condition being an easy one was accepted, and Cottolengo then hurried with the money to the baker's shop. "What is this?" asked the man, in a tone of mixed surprise and vexation, "what do you mean by paying twice? Do you doubt my honesty and come to test it? Did you not a short time ago send one of your men with the money?" It was so. Whilst they were at breakfast, his benefactor's valet had been sent by his master to anticipate the Canon and pay the debt. Cottolengo, somewhat puzzled, went back to his friend to refund the loan, but he was requested to retain it. "I suppose," the gentleman said, "that you have many creditors like the baker; keep the money to settle with them, and think no more about it."

As his brother, Father Albert, was taking leave of him to return to his convent, the Canon said: "Father Albert, to-morrow I shall want sixty francs, and I expect you to get them for me." "Indeed," was the answer, "you may more easily draw water from a dry well than money from me." "I tell you that I need them, and I wish you to understand that you must bring them." The next day Father Albert accompanied Father Negrone on a visit to Signora Ortalda, a rich widow and generous benefactrix of their convent, and presented her with a handsome picture of *Mater Dolorosa*, painted on ivory. The lady was exceedingly pleased with the gift and handed him a parcel, saying: "You have

many appeals from the poor; dispose of this little bit of charity in their behalf." When he counted the money he found the exact sum which his brother was expecting to receive from him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PICCOLA CASA AND THE SARDINIAN GOVERNMENT.

THE rise and growth of the Piccola Casa and its various vicissitudes had been watched by the Sardinian Government, which had so far held aloof from it, and shown it neither favour nor hostility. Nevertheless, its Ministers were alarmed by the fact of more than six hundred persons being lodged and provided for by a man without means of any sort. They feared lest in certain contingencies, the burden of supporting this multitude of paupers might fall on the Government, or that it might be under the unpleasant necessity of closing the establishment. It was therefore decided that Count d'Escarena, Charles Albert's Minister for Home Affairs, should investigate the matter and inquire into the state of the establishment. An interview between him and Don Cottolengo was arranged, and when the Minister said, "You are the Director of the establishment of Valdocco?" "Not exactly," was Cottolengo's answer, "I am a mere tool in the hands of Providence. As a priest, I am bound to

help the sick and destitute, and I strive to do so under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul." "This is perfectly right, and your zeal is praiseworthy, but with what means do you intend to provide for such a number of people?" "With those supplied by Divine Providence, my lord." "In order to provide for so many destitute persons, there must be funds and revenues on which you may depend?" "Of course, and we have them, for Divine Providence keeps us well supplied. Does your lordship think that Providence will fail us?" "Be it as you say, Canon, but the Government has a right to know your ways and means, for it is rashness to plunge into such an undertaking without any provision for it." "I do hope your lordship will not find any fault with us for living at the expenses of Providence?" "But if you happen to fail, Don Cottolengo, in what an awkward position the Government will be placed!" "God will provide for the future as He has done for the past. So far we have harmed none of the King's subjects, nor did we ask favours from the Government, and you have no reason for fear, my lord, because Providence never fails those who trust in it." The Minister rose and dismissed the Canon, expressing a hope that he would long enjoy the blessings of such a Providence, and in his report to the King he remarked "that so firm was the confidence of Don Cottolengo in Providence, so angelic and serene his countenance, and so pure and noble were his motives, that he was thoroughly convinced that the hand of God was with him, and that his undertaking

was deserving of the royal favour and patronage." The King was gratified, and as a token of his royal pleasure, made the zealous priest a knight of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus, an honour which his humility would have refused, had not respect for the King obliged him to accept it.

King Charles Albert held the Venerable Cottolengo in the highest esteem, befriended him at all times, and deemed it a privilege that his reign should be illustrated by the eminent virtues of a man who was a living image of St. Vincent de Paul. Once an officer of the Court came to the Piccola Casa announcing that on a certain day His Majesty would honour the establishment with a visit. Don Cottolengo, who was more anxious to enjoy the favour and providence of the Heavenly King than of the earthly monarch, begged the messenger to inform the King "that the Piccola Casa appreciated most gratefully the royal condescension, but that His Majesty would bestow a greater favour by withholding his gracious visit, for this display of human providence might not prove acceptable to Divine Providence." The King did not pay his intended visit.

Being requested by the King to place the charitable institution under royal protection, Cottolengo respectfully declined for the same reason, saying: "Such a thing, sire, is next to impossible. The Piccola Casa already enjoys the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of God's providence; what other patronage can it require?" The King acquiesced.

One day, when he was in the royal palace, the King remarked: "Canon, I hope you will live a long time, but were you to pass away one of these days, what provision or arrangement have you made about your successor? Would it not be wise for you to choose some one." "What," interrupted the Canon, "has your Majesty misgivings in regard to God's providence? Why not leave to God the care of choosing my successor? Pray, sire, look at those soldiers at the palace gate, when the sentinels are released. A word is whispered from ear to ear, a new sentinel replaces the old one, and the rest go to their station. So it will be when my turn comes to be relieved. God will whisper His holy will into some one's ear, and the chosen one will come and occupy my place." The King admired the force and simplicity of his remark, and answered, "Be it as you say, my dear Canon. May Providence ever protect you; I will not be a stumbling-block on your path."

Another time Charles Albert advised him to have an accountant and clerks to keep the books and registers. "What confusion, my dear Canon; if you die, how will people get their due, and the Home retain its own? "Sire," asked the Canon, with a smile and a look more eloquent than words, "how long has Providence ruled this universe?" "About six thousand years," replied the King. "And during that long period has it been known that Providence has wronged any one or denied any one his due? Or does it keep books and registers? or has it ever become bankrupt? The Piccola Casa

is the House of Providence, ruled by it, provided for by it. It will never be a loser itself, or be the cause of losses to any one. When this tool becomes old and rusty and is laid aside, another will be substituted, and every one will get his own." The King smiled and dismissed him with these words: "Do as God inspires you; Providence began the work, Providence will crown it."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THE MONASTERY OF SUFFRAGES AND THE DAUGHTERS OF PITY.

So far we have followed the Venerable Servant of God, Don Joseph Cottolengo, step by step, in his unwearied apostolate of charity among the suffering members of the human family, to whose corporal necessities he so well ministered. But this was only one part of his mission. He had received a still higher vocation, and was called upon to labour for the souls of men that they might be ransomed from sin and sanctified by grace. Indeed, ever since the foundation of the Piccola Casa, the Venerable Cottolengo had never lost sight of the spiritual needs of its inmates, and the reason why he attended so assiduously to the wants of the body, was that he might find his way to the soul. But now he must do something even greater than this.

The friends and admirers of Venerable Joseph Cottolengo were far from suspecting that a man who seemed totally absorbed in the laborious ministrations of corporal works of mercy, was entertaining projects of quite a different nature, strange in their eyes and at variance with worldly fashion and modern ideas. To people the Piccola Casa with

a number of religious congregations of both sexes, each with its distinctive rule and habit and its special object, seemed an attempt foolhardy in conception and profitless in possible results. Nevertheless, this is what the man of God attempted, and we shall see with what success. Saints are always men of sublime thoughts, and often of vast schemes. Hidden, silent, unobtrusive, humble, distrustful of self, and of little account among their equals, they alone dare to plan and execute wonderful things for the glory of God and the welfare of their fellow-creatures. Their hearts are great, because God fills them, and their schemes succeed because God works for them.

In obedience to a command from above, the Venerable Cottolengo resolved to execute his long cherished design of establishing within the boundaries of the Piccola Casa several religious congregations, who should offer constant prayer for every order of society and every class of persons: for the Church and her needs, and the Supreme Pontiff, for the prosperity of kingdoms and the royal family, for civil and ecclesiastical orders, for pagans and the missionaries who preach the Gospel to them, priests and religious, the tempted and the sinful, for the souls of the departed and of those in the agony of death. The Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Louis Fransoni, who died an exile from his diocese for his attachment to the Holy See and his fidelity in discharging the duties of his episcopal office, granted him all the powers necessary for the execution of his design. "I must let him do this," he said, "for

the Spirit of God is in him, and since I have known the good Canon, I have always found him true to his word, and most prudent in all his undertakings."

In the year 1840, he founded the Monastery of Suffrages, in a small house near the Church of St. Peter in Vinculis, and the cloistered nuns he placed in it were bound by vow not only to offer their prayers and penances, but likewise to devote their whole lives to the relief of the suffering souls in Purgatory. The Canon used to remark that "this was the first monastery ever instituted for the relief of the holy souls deprived for a time of the vision of God."

This foundation had been for many years maturing in his mind; and, the better to ascertain God's will, he had prayed incessantly to know it. He was now so certain that the new Congregation was pleasing to the Divine Majesty, that when he gave the Sisters their Rules, he declared that they were not made by him but by God, under Whose inspiration they had been written. The foundation of this Religious Congregation he had foretold in the year 1835, under the following circumstances. Sister Gertrude, a Vincentian, was dangerously ill, and, with her sorrowing parents and religious Sisters by her side, was expected every moment to breathe her last, when the Venerable Cottolengo coming to her bedside, whispered a few words into her ear, and turning to her parents, said: "Be of good cheer, your daughter shall not die; she is not ripe for Heaven yet, and greater labours are in store for her. I am going to make her Superior in a new convent."

She soon recovered and, in course of time, was elected Superior of the Convent of Suffrages.

As we have said above, the object of this Congregation is to obtain the admittance of the souls in Purgatory to the rest and happiness of Heaven. For this end perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is kept up in the convent.

Their silence and solitude were only disturbed from without. Some workmen belonging to a factory close by would, during their free time, climb the enclosure walls, call the good Sisters names, and pelt them with stones and mud. When the nuns complained to their founder, he turned towards the factory, uttered a silent prayer, and bade them be of good cheer, for that the annoyance would soon come to an end. Scarcely a few months had elapsed, when the factory was consumed by fire, and never rebuilt.

At a short distance from the Monastery of Suffrages, another Congregation was established, called the Daughters of Pity. Its end was to honour the Passion of our suffering Lord Jesus and the sorrowful heart of His Blessed Mother. It was to be, as it were, a small Calvary within the walls of the Piccola Casa. At the sound of the midnight bell, the Sisters walk in silent procession to their chapel, and make the Stations, following our Lord in spirit on His painful journey, sorrowing with Him, and blessing the love that made Him die on the Cross. Day and night the Sisters take it in turn to spend an hour in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, images of the loving Magdalen watching at the tomb of Jesus.

Overcoming his humility, which draws a veil over God's gifts, he told these Sisters also that the Rule which was to be the guide of their lives had been drawn up under the special inspiration of God, and that their blue and white habit, with the cross and the picture of the *Mater Dolorosa* on the scapular, had been cut from a pattern given by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Everything in their cells and their chapel, in their rooms and refectory, suggests the thought of the Passion of our Divine Lord. The prayers and good works of the Daughters of Pity, were specially offered to obtain for the souls of the dying the grace of a happy death.

About the year 1839, a Congregation for men, viz., Hermits of the Holy Rosary, was established in Gassino, not far from Turin, whence it was transferred to the Piccola Casa. To this Congregation were admitted men who wished to embrace a life of hard toil and austere penance. Their hours of sleep were few; they wore only wooden sandals on their feet; they kept perpetual abstinence from flesh-meat, and lived on the most penitential fare. Their time was divided between prayer and labour, and in turn they kept perpetual watch before the Blessed Sacrament. They were a happy and edifying band of hermits emulating the Fathers of the old Egyptian deserts. That God was pleased with their penitential life has been inferred from miraculous cures wrought on two of their number by the Venerable Cottolengo. One was Benuzio, their first Superior, who was freed from the epileptic fits to which he had been subject; the other was on

Brother Saba, whom Cottolengo brought sound and well from his sick-bed into the chapel where the hermits were assembled for their vigil.

CHAPTER II.

CARMELITE NUNS AND DAUGHTERS OF THAIS.

THE work assigned by Providence to Don Cottolengo was progressing, and the Piccola Casa was extending its limits and multiplying its religious families, one of which, viz., the Discalced Carmelite nuns, now claims our attention. Their institution was not a design of Cottolengo's, but an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He had purchased, in the delightful region of Cavoretto, in the neighbourhood of the capital, a villa for the accommodation of those among the Vincentian Sisters whose age entitled them to rest and whose health needed recruiting. Twenty Sisters happened to be at the villa, enjoying the balmy climate and the pleasure of being in the country, when the Venerable Servant of God one day made his appearance, beaming with smiles and pleasure. Walking straight to the kitchen, while dinner was being prepared, he said: "Whence is this smell of roast meat, and for whom is that meat on the grate? Away with it, send it to the farmer's family and let them feast on it. Henceforth you shall do without such dainty

food, for herbs and grain shall be your diet; you are going, every one of you, to be Carmelite nuns." Great was their astonishment at this sudden announcement, but their readiness to acquiesce in the change was still greater; for they were aware that the holy priest was guided by the Spirit of God. Such was the beginning of his Carmelite convent, which he placed under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel. The austerity of the Rule, which was willingly accepted by the Sisters, far from slackening their fervour, only increased it. Barefoot and wearing a habit of black serge, which they never put off even at night, bound to perpetual fast, and having for food only herbs and vegetables, they spend the day, and a portion of the night, in prayer. They are almost entirely cut off from communication with the outer world, and within their enclosure silence is scarcely ever broken. They offer their prayers and penances to God for a two-fold object, viz., to obtain for the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy the zeal and piety, wisdom and strength in the discharge of their duties, and to forward the triumph of the Church over the malice and opposition of her enemies.

He used to visit this pious community once a week, when he earnestly exhorted them to renew their fervour and persevere in their good purposes. Being told that their rigorous life was beginning to tell on the religious, many of whom were becoming ill and unfit for duty, he answered: "Fear not, all will be right. When I tried the same sort of thing

myself, I felt the same sort of annoyance for several months; but it soon passed away. It will be the same with you." His prediction was verified.

He now turned his zeal and attention in another direction. Women who had been lured from the path of virtue into the ways of sin and shame, seemed to stretch out their hands to him for help. He saw that they were by no means beyond hope of reformation, but that some one, prompted by charity and gifted with discretion, must come to their rescue. But at present he was biding his time and waiting for a manifestation of God's will; for it was his practice never to begin any charitable undertaking of consequence, without first receiving a clear indication of the Divine pleasure. Such an intimation was soon given. In the year 1840, a fallen woman who had been touched by grace at a mission sermon, and resolved to retrace her steps and return to the path of virtue, was brought to him. He admitted her to the Piccola Casa on the condition that she should bring others of her class to desire to amend their lives. Happily she was able to do this, and in a short time she had gained twelve recruits, who formed the nucleus of a community of penitents who had for their patroness St. Thais, the Egyptian penitent. They were at first established in the little town of Gassino, but were soon removed within the walls of the Piccola Casa, for the inhabitants of Gassino affected to fear that they might be tainted by the proximity of the penitent girls. Their convent was dedicated to St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In a short time thirty penitents were gathered in this house of refuge, and it was consoling to see the happy change which had been there wrought. The Rule they observed was severe; and before long they assumed with the habit the forms and practices of religious life. Thus these repentant Magdalens, who had been a stumbling-block in the path of many, became shining lights of holiness to the edification of many.

Of course there were persons who were angered by the undertaking, and swore vengeance against the Canon. And they tried to accomplish their wicked purpose. After lying in wait for him for some time, they surprised him one dark night, as he was returning from an errand of charity, and attacked him with great violence, striking him so severely with their fists and sticks that he never recovered either from the fright or from the bruises he received.

We shall conclude this chapter with an anecdote connected with the purchase of the house for Magdalens at Gassino. Having concluded the purchase and fixed the day for payment, the Canon called at the appointed time on the public notary, who was preparing the deeds of transfer. As he was passing the mansion of a rich friend, he called in and was heartily welcomed by all. Suddenly interrupting the conversation, he said, "How strange, I am going to the public notary where I am expected to pay for the house I bought in Gassino, and there is in my purse as much gold as there is in a soap bubble." This friend took

the hint and answered: "We will come to your assistance; I and my wife, my sons and my daughters will make up the sum." And they did so. On reaching the official, he was informed that the payment had to be deferred, on account of some missing documents. He therefore returned home, and on his way distributed all the money he had received to the poor he met on the way, saying: "I must give back to them what belongs to them." When a week later he was apprised that payment was expected, he went back to the same family, explained his difficulty and told them how the sum they had given him had gone to the poor. To his joy he found his friends as generous the second as they had been the first time.

CHAPTER III.

NEW INSTITUTIONS AND BRANCH HOUSES.

We shall here briefly mention three new institutions which the untiring zeal of the Venerable Cottolengo added to the Piccola Casa; one was for boys, another was for girls, and a third was for priests. In the year 1840, he said to Canon Anglesio, his fellow-worker and assistant, soon to be his successor, "God has signified to me His good pleasure that the priests who dwell in the Piccola Casa, should form a religious family to be known as the Congregation of the Holy Trinity. We must obey, Providence will assist us, let us set to work." The object of this organization was to have a permanent body of zealous and devoted priests ever ready to minister to the spiritual wants of the numerous inmates of the Piccola Casa. Other priests, willing to offer their spiritual help, were not excluded; but he wished that the burden and responsibility of the spiritual services of the establishment should mainly devolve on the members of the new Congregation. They were to live permanently in the house, under obedience, to be free from other duties, and to do for the souls of the inmates what the Vincentian Sisters were doing

for their bodies. They were not bound by any vows, but they led a common life, wore a distinctive habit, were free from the care of temporalities, and said Office in choir.

In 1841, a College under the invocation of St. Thomas, Doctor of the Church, was established for boys, from among whom the Congregation of the Holy Trinity might afterwards be recruited. The Canon had noticed that, among the lads from the streets whom he had sheltered in the Piccola Casa, many were healthy, well-bred, and intelligent, and had perhaps the germs of a vocation to the priesthood; but being the children of poor parents, were without the means of being educated for the ecclesiastical state. For cases such as these he established this College, where the boys might be trained in virtue and learning, and prepared for the priestly life if such were their call. He chose twelve from among the boys in the Piccola Casa, dressed them in a fitting uniform, styled them St. Thomas' boys, and thus laid the foundation of the new College, which soon numbered a hundred students, whose progress in piety and learning afforded him the greatest consolation. When their college course was ended, they were free either to remain in the Piccola Casa or to join the dioceses of their respective Bishops.

The same year he founded a Sisterhood for women desirous to consecrate themselves to God in the religious state, but hindered from doing so by delicacy of health. These Sisters were called the Pastorelle, or Daughters of the Divine Shepherd.

After taking their vows, they were engaged in light domestic occupations, had charge of the linen, catechized the ignorant, and offered their prayers for the conversion of wayward girls and of those whose virtue was in jeopardy.

Cottolengo's fame had become widespread. The renown of his virtues and of the charitable works of the Vincentian Sisters induced the authorities of many towns to apply to the Venerable founder of the Piccola Casa for branch foundations. Don Cottolengo was often, therefore, compelled to absent himself from Turin, either to establish new houses or to visit them when established. He was anxious that the Sisters, when cut off in person from the mother-house, should be closely united to it in spirit and uniformity of life. This was the end of his instructions when he sent them out to their new convents or visited them there. He was careful also to ascertain and see with his own eyes, that the homes, schools, and hospitals were so arranged as not to interfere with the form of community life which he had prescribed for them; and he accepted these new establishments only for a limited time, so that, if they did not prove successful, he might be at liberty to recall the Sisters.

He exhorted them to be always mindful of piety and charity, of humility and simplicity, of reverence and kindness to all. He bade them never trust in their own talents and abilities, or in the favour of powerful persons, but in the name of God alone, holding high, as it were, their banner, on which all might read their motto: "We trust in Providence."

They were to be ready to meet opposition and persecution without flinching, or being discouraged, or giving up even the least of their good works. "Do not be faint-hearted," he said to them; "after all, you have neither been beaten nor stoned to death. Contradictions and vexations from men bring along with them the blessings of Heaven. Do not invite them, but profit by them when they come. God is nearer to us and more pleased with us, when we are under the clouds of tribulation, than when we are in the sunshine of prosperity." He would not allow the Vincentians to employ paid servants or to avail themselves of the services of externs in their hospitals. In the year 1837, the Sisters, who were nursing the sick in the hospital of Fossano, begged to be allowed to get some lay helpers, as the wards were crowded, and nearly half the patients were infected with the prevalent epidemic. He refused the permission; but his refusal was such as only saints know how to give. "Be of good cheer; God will bless your labours. In a few days the epidemic will disappear, and all the Sisters will do well."

The Vincentian Sisters were expected to be daily communicants. This pious practice, which is so highly approved and so strongly recommended by the Church, was observed whilst they were in the mother-house, and found many admirers and imitators. But elsewhere many laymen, and some ecclesiastics, took scandal at it, condemned it, and strove to hinder its continuance. The Venerable Founder of the Piccola Casa was, however, firm in

enforcing it, and its opponents did not prevail. Rather than let the Sisters give up the holy practice, he was ready to recall them to the mother-house. "From constant prayer and daily Communion," he said, "the Sisters derive strength for their arduous labours. Without this they would grow faint, and Divine grace would desert them. Their hearts are weak and they are surrounded by dangers; they must put on their armour at the foot of the altar, and brace themselves with the Bread of the strong." It was objected: "Such is not the custom with us." "It is not with you, but it is with us," was his reply. "People will ridicule the Sisters," was the rejoinder. "Let them do so," said Cottolengo; "where angels smile, mortals may scoff."

His official visitations of the convents brought with them consolation and cheerfulness, and never failed to renew in the Sisters the spirit of their vocation and to strengthen their resolutions for the future. The man of Divine Providence was among them like an angel from Heaven, and so great was their esteem of his virtues, and their reverence for his mission, that their obedience to his orders was in itself a pleasure. God often rewarded their faith and obedience with wonderful cures. Sister Carolina was suffering from inflammation of the lungs; she had received the last sacraments, and was apparently in her death-agony. He went to her, laid his hand on her head and said to her: "Take courage, you must recover and prepare yourself to go to the mountains." She was restored

to health, and a few weeks afterwards was sent with some other Sisters to Utelle. Sister Justina, having been confined to her bed by excruciating pains, and finding herself unable to discharge her duties, begged him to recall her to the mother-house. "We shall see," he answered, and he gave her forty francs, commanding her to get them changed for smaller coins and distribute them with her own hands among the poor of the hospital. She did so, and as she gave away the little coins her sufferings also vanished. There are hundreds of similar incidents on record; but their number makes it impossible to mention them. All were much of the same character.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PICCOLA CASA AND ITS GOVERNMENT.

In this chapter we shall glance briefly at the spirit by which the Piccola Casa is governed.

The founder of the Piccola Casa was, as we have seen, a man of faith and hope, and every one connected with it was expected to be animated by the same spirit. The prosperity of the place depended upon confidence in God; the greater this confidence, the greater was the success of the Piccola Casa. "If the spirit of faith is lost, the institution will fail, and be reduced to the level of human institutions." "In the Piccola Casa there is but one master, God." "No other authority is owned here but the supreme authority of Divine Providence." "God is our Heavenly Father, you are His children, and I the least of His servants." "There is nothing of mine in the Piccola Casa, not an inch of ground has been purchased, not a wall has been raised, not a garden fenced, but by the command of Providence: I am ready to tear down with my own hands every brick and fling away every tile, were such the Divine bidding." "Merchants and bankers, even Governments, may become bankrupt, but not the Piccola Casa, inasmuch as

it rests on this pillar of Faith." "This house shall extend its boundaries, increase the number of its inmates, receive greater blessings from Heaven, provided we trust in Providence." Such were some of his sayings about the Piccola Casa, and thus he endeavoured to communicate to others his own spirit of faith.

Such being the spirit of the House of Providence, it obviously must be the house of prayer and humility; of prayer, which implores God to bestow His liberal blessings, and which thank Him for them when they are granted; of humility, which claims nothing as due, but receives all as a gratuitous gift from the hands of God. This spirit of humility was always strong and fruitful in the Piccola Casa. It manifested itself in the peaceful abandonment of all the inmates into the hands of God; in their gratitude for all the benefits received from Him; in their resignation in regard to their manner of life; in the calm and joyful patience with which they suffered their infirmities; in the daily service of self-denial given by the Sisters to the sick, no matter how disgusting and repulsive they might be; in the perfect acquiescence of all to the will of God; in the holy indifference which led them to be never overjoyed in times of plenty, and never dejected in days of scarcity; in the harmonious union of hearts that existed among the members of the Homes, Convents, and Colleges, who, though living in separate establishments, were all united in the Heart of Jesus by the bonds of charity and faith, as the true sons and daughters of Divine Providence.

Prayer, which opens the treasuries of God and draws God's blessings on man, was, as we have more than once said, a peculiar feature of the Piccola Casa, where it was a constant, universal, uninterrupted exercise by night as well as by day. The *Salve Regina* recited at the adjoining celebrated shrine of the Consolata, may have brought many blessings on those who recited it. "No prayer, no bread for the Piccola Casa," Cottolengo used to say. He not only advocated prayer, but he was most edifying in his practice of it. When pressed by urgent needs, when seeking counsel, when about to begin some improvement or some new undertaking, he was most fervent and persevering in prayer. "The Piccola Casa is like a stately chariot," he said, "advancing to its great destiny on the wheels of prayer and humility." "Not all can work, but all can pray," he said. Hence every one had to take his turn in prayer. No sooner did any one set his foot on the threshold of this wonderful establishment, than he perceived that he had entered the house of prayer. Hymns and canticles were heard on every side, processions to the chant of litanies wound their way from house to house, many fervent suppliants made the Stations of the Cross, and the *Deo gratias*—"Thanks be to God," was upon every lip.

The prayers prescribed in the Piccola Casa had two particular features, which show in a clearer light the spirit of faith by which all the inmates, whether brethren, sisters, children, or patients, were to be animated. In the first place, so thoroughly

convinced were they to be that their Heavenly Father knew all their needs and desires, and was ever prompt to come to their assistance, that they were to pray not to obtain any definite favours and particular graces, but with a perfect reliance in God's providence to adore, bless, and thank Him for His mercy and liberality, and to expect further blessings from His hands, as it would please Him to bestow them. Secondly, the prayers prescribed were to be considered not so much as belonging to individuals as to the whole body. They were common property, constituting, as it were, the common fund of the community, the spiritual gold mine of the Piccola Casa, from which the pious founder would draw, as the wants of the institution or the necessity of the times demanded. When visitors asked in wonder from what funds and with what means such a large multitude was supported, "Come and see," was the answer of their guides, and opening the doors of the church, they would point to the crowd of worshippers ever present before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, and say: "Here are our funds, and from here come our revenues."

As to the government of the Piccola Casa, we are justified in saying that it rested entirely on the shoulders of Cottolengo. Though all the branches of the establishment were severally independent, and had their own Superiors, called assistants, and their own officers, yet he was the Superior General and responsible manager of the whole, and of all its parts. He alone received reports and issued

general orders. Nothing was initiated, altered, or improved but by his advice and approval. It was indeed matter of wonder how he could keep his mind on all details as he did, how he could have his eye on everything and on every person, provide for all needs, and take great interest in everything that went on. His vigilance and activity also helped to show that he was the visible hand of Divine Providence, governing that privileged house with the utmost wisdom and kindness. Notwithstanding all this, he looked upon himself and spoke of himself as a man of ease and leisure, on whose hands time hung heavily.

At stated periods he went on visitation through the Homes and spiritual families of the Piccola Casa, and everywhere he brought with him brightness and happiness. He listened patiently to every one, and not a word of reproach was ever heard from his lips, which were always ready with consolation and sympathy. When his subjects were inconvenienced by any office or labour, or by weather or surroundings, he was careful to change their occupations or to remove them to another house, so that they might serve God with joy and peace; for he would rather show indulgence towards the faint-hearted than irritate them by severity. In order to comfort a Sister who feared to be removed from the mother-house, he said to her: "Keep your peace, go cheerfully about your work, you shall never quit the Piccola Casa." To another who could not bring herself to like the employment assigned her, he said: "As there are many mansions in

Heaven, so there are offices in the Piccola Casa to satisfy every taste. I will employ you in such duties as may prove agreeable to you." In the same way, if he perceived that attendance on the sick in the hospitals was detrimental to some Sisters, he would employ them in the schools. Thus his charity was ever watchful to maintain the courage and the peace of mind of the Sisters. Nevertheless, he was unceasing in his exhortations to kindle in their hearts the fire of charity and to keep alive in their souls the spirit of self-denial, and he urged them to serve God in His poor, and sacrifice themselves willingly in behalf of their neighbour. His words were not unavailing, and he had the consolation of seeing hundreds of Sisters devoting themselves with all their energies to the service of our Lord and of His suffering brethren, in charity, faith, and peace. When the Bishop of Mondovi wondered how he could govern this vast establishment alone, and keep things going so smoothly and in such perfect order, Don Cottolengo answered: "I am a child in the hands of Providence. I only execute here what God has planned above."

CHAPTER V.

HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL WELFARE OF THE INMATES OF THE HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS.

No loving, devoted mother could nurse her only child more tenderly than the Venerable Cottolengo nursed the inmates of his hospitals. As we have said before, the servant of God, enlightened by lively faith, saw the adorable Person of Jesus Christ in the poor whom he had gathered together in the Piccola Casa. When he looked upon them as representatives of our Divine Lord, their poverty and sores became invisible to him, and he saw in them only the masters and lords of the Piccola Casa. The more deformed they were, the more hideous their wounds, the more poisonous their diseases, and the more repulsive their appearance, the more he felt attracted towards them; he called them the gems and pearls of his institute, and when he saw such persons walking towards the Piccola Casa, he would send for the Sisters, and say: "Come quickly, some jewels for the Piccola Casa are lying in the street. We must take them in."

Animated by this lively faith, he not only spent with them a great portion of the day, but also many

hours of the night. To dress them he would not hesitate to strip his person and his room, and if necessary, even to sell the altar vessels. In the hospitals he would mix medicines, bandage wounds, and remove filthy insects from the patients; and all these ministrations, so repugnant to nature, were sweetened by the recollection of the image of our Lord. When they came to the hospital, he hastened to welcome and bless them. No expense was too great, no sacrifice too hard to be undertaken for them. In order to obtain for his chronic invalids the benefit of the sulphur-baths of Acqui, he obtained for them a free yearly excursion to that renowned bathing establishment. On the principal feasts of our Lord and His Blessed Mother, he never failed to visit the hospitals, where he would distribute delicious fruits and sweetmeats to the patients, console them with words of sympathy, and give them his blessing.

If the servant of God was so careful about the comforts of the body, we may well imagine how much more solicitous he was regarding the welfare of the soul. "It is a pleasure," he said, "to relieve the bodily ailments of these wretched people, but it is a necessity to get them out of their spiritual infirmities." His spiritual assistants helped him to prepare all those who came to the Piccola Casa to make their peace with God, and restore their souls to spiritual health. These zealous apostles went about this difficult work so prudently, that no one has ever been known to die in these hospitals without having made his peace with God. "When

all your exertions fail and all your patience is exhausted, apply to me, and I will come to your aid," he would say. When he was sought for on such occasions, it was sufficient for him to come before the most hardened sinners, address them with his usual kindness, and fall on his knees to pray for them, in order to overcome their obstinacy and bring them to repentance.

The Piccola Casa was the Home of Providence; it was therefore to be the home of sanctity. The holy man branded sin as its deadly enemy and closed its doors against it by all the means in his power. "In no place," he said, "would the enormity of sin appear more hideously than in this house. For it is the privileged house which God has chosen wherein He may display His special providence and renew daily the miraculous multiplication of the loaves. The crowd that were fed in the desert, sought Jesus to proclaim Him their King: shall we show our gratitude by committing a sin?" He endeavoured to implant in every heart the horror for sin which he himself felt. To warn people not to commit sin, he ordered the motto, "God sees you," to be written in large letters on nearly every wall, and he appointed a person to cry aloud when the clock struck: *Ab omni peccato, libera nos, Domine.* He recommended the Sisters and officers of the Piccola Casa to do all they could for the service of the poor, but to give no quarter to sin or sinners. He never spared himself in preaching his crusade against mortal sin. Entering the children's refectories, while they were at meals, he

would say: "My dear children, who gives you this delicious bread, for which you seem to have so great a relish? and who fills these dishes with this food which you eat so quickly? Is it not the bounteous God of Heaven? And should you not in return, bless and love Him for His liberality to you? Is there one here among you who would dare to repay so much goodness with mortal sin?" Whenever the daily supplies of food became scarce, he attributed it to the presence of sin in the house; and, in atonement for the offence offered to God, he chanted the psalm *Miserere*, before giving to the assembled congregation the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which closed the labours of the day. On one occasion his admonition was most impressive and struck terror into many hearts. He had given Holy Communion to some persons, and before closing the tabernacle he remained for a while gazing intently on the ciborium; then facing the congregation, he cried with a loud voice: "Did you hear what the Lord said from His tabernacle? He said that the ciborium is full and the pantry empty," and having ended the Mass, he explained that the supplies were scarce, because some sin had been committed, which kept the offenders from Holy Communion.

At another time when he was preaching from the pulpit, he sounded the alarm against the dreaded foe, in these words: "Mortal sin is lurking in this house; some one has sinned against the Lord. There is in our midst a Jonas, who will draw God's vengeance upon us all. Let him repent, or begone,

or else we shall all suffer." Not satisfied with this intimation, which caused many to turn pale and be frightened, he came down from the pulpit, and went in haste to one of the Homes, crying with increased earnestness, and with tears: "The Jonas is here; the guilty Jonas must go." The warning had its effect; for the guilty person, alarmed by the looks of the preacher and touched by Divine grace, threw himself at his feet, acknowledged his offence, and begged for God's pardon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PICCOLA CASA AND PRAYER.

Our age, which is fond of talking, of self-exaltation and money-making, is not an age of prayer. It is content to strut along on the stilts of independence and self-reliance; what it gets, it gets by its own efforts; what it does not possess, no one can give it. Not satisfied with rebelling against the obligation of prayer, it strives, by ridicule and false reasoning, to seal the lips of Christians who pray, and to tear down the sanctuaries of prayer. The Piccola Casa, as the Venerable Canon Cottolengo established it, and as it still exists, is one of the most glorious monuments raised in our times in honour of prayer; it is a practical refutation of some of the errors of the world; and it is itself an answer to those who deny the power of prayer.

The Piccola Casa is in a supreme degree the house of prayer. Prayer is its life, its vigour, its joy, and its constant occupation. When visitors set foot in it, their eyes are attracted by a beautifully decorated shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, holding in her arms the Child Jesus. Here is generally seen a pious throng of old and young, asking on bended knees as they pass by her maternal blessing. The applicants for admission to the Piccola Casa were here met by the Venerable Founder, who, with his sweet smile and affectionate words of sympathy, bade them welcome, and led them to the Blessed Virgin's shrine, to recite the *Ave Maria* or the *Salve Regina*. After reverently kissing the ground and receiving his priestly benediction, they were given into the charge of the Vincentian Sisters. Thus they were at the outset taught to humble themselves and to attribute to the Mother of Jesus the favour of their admission to the house of God.

The day began with the recitation of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, and half an hour's meditation. At a given sign, the members of the different Homes, starting from their private oratories, walked in procession to the church, and heard Mass, which was generally said by Cottolengo himself. After the whole Rosary had been said again, and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin had been sung, a sermon or instruction was given by the pious Canon, in his plain, familiar style. He seemed to read the hearts of his hearers, to know their temptations, to anticipate their objections, to foresee their diffi-

culties, and to offer counsel, remedies, and exhortations, as necessity demanded. They were delighted, and used to say: "When our Father preaches, he goes right to our hearts." After this they all heard another Mass, called the "Mass of the *Pater noster*," for during its celebration, a chaplet of fifty *Paters* and *Aves* was recited, each decade being separated with the chant of a pious hymn. This prayer was offered to obtain God's blessings upon the institution, and to beg for the graces necessary to lead a good and saintly life.

During the day, and while they were engaged in the discharge of their respective duties, all in the Piccola Casa were reminded, from time to time, to lift up their hearts to God, and when the clock struck the hours, pious aspirations were repeated, and *Ab omni peccato, libera nos, Domine*, or, "Remember that you are in God's presence," was heard from every lip. After the morning, noon, and evening *Angelus*, seven *Paters* were recited by the Sisters with extended or uplifted hands, and the evening prayers were followed by a short meditation on the Passion of our Lord. Cottolengo insisted that all these exercises should be performed with diligence and assiduity, for these prayers formed the gold and silver with which his spiritual treasury was replenished. He reserved to himself the intention of the prayers, which he applied as he judged best, and offered to God to obtain blessings upon the Universal Church and spiritual favours for the Christian people and the Little House of Providence. Such were his riches, and so great was his

reliance on this power, that he dreaded no evil and held in his hands all spiritual and temporal blessings.

As our Lord was the Master and King of the Piccola Casa, the Blessed Virgin Mary was its Mother and Queen. He had built near his room a handsome shrine, and placed in it a picture of the Blessed Mother of God, a faithful copy of the picture which is venerated in the famous sanctuary of Oropa, near the city of Biella. This was the sanctuary of the Piccola Casa. Every day at noon, one or other of his many religious families came here processionally, preceded by the Cross, and chanting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On reaching the shrine they knelt before it and begged her motherly blessing, and, before returning, left an offering of flowers for the altar and oil for its lamp.

Not even the sick were exempted from the duty of prayer; and all had to take part in it, as far as their infirmities allowed them. One of their forms of prayers consisted of a chaplet of five *Paters* with the invocation, "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, help us to become saints," repeated ten times. Its effects were marvellous. An obstinate sinner, who, turning a deaf ear to priests and nuns, had in other hospitals stubbornly refused to make his peace with God, endeavoured, on hearing this invocation, to drown its sound by pretending to snore. But it fell so often on his ear, that his lips began to repeat it mechanically, and this they continued to do till he said it from his heart, and made his peace with

God, blessing the Refuge of Sinners for having come to his assistance.

But the prayers most valued by Cottolengo were those said before the Blessed Sacrament, where devout communicants knelt every morning to receive Holy Communion. It gladdened the heart of the venerable man to see them—for he never felt happier than when he saw a large number of communicants round the Holy Table, and never more sad and pained than when their numbers were few. He would say: "If *my* soul feels so sadly grieved at the sight of so few communicants, how much more grieved must the Heart of our Lord be." As we have already seen, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was kept up during both day and night in the church of the Piccola Casa.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW HE PROMOTED CHARITY AND CHEERFULNESS.

The Venerable Cottolengo was most solicitous to promote a truly Christian spirit among his children at the Piccola Casa, and he energetically exhorted them to charity and union, to peace and cheerfulness. In this, as in everything else, his example was even more efficacious than his words. The peace and serenity which beamed from his countenance, his affability of manners, his geniality in conversation, and his kindness to all persons without distinction, were more than sufficient to promote universal charity and cheerfulness. Indeed, with St. Paul he became all things to all men, no matter what their state or condition. He was as one of themselves, identifying himself with their tastes, their habits, and their fashions, and speaking to artisans, labourers, or tradesmen as one of their own class. This was a striking feature in his dealings with the veterans of the armies of the first Napoleon, who often pestered him with the oft-told, interminable tales of their real or fancied warlike exploits ; he listened to them with as much apparent interest as if the stories were true and each time new to him. By giving them a patient hearing,

he made them happy, and more disposed to show kindness to their companions; and thus he promoted interests of charity and cheerfulness.

When going his rounds in the Homes, he was an apostle of fraternal charity, exhorting all to mutual kindness and assistance; to put up with one another's faults, and extend to others the forgiveness they expected for themselves. Whatever was likely to lead to disunion of hearts, breaches of charity, quarrelling and murmuring and petty animosities, was to be shunned. Kind, patient, sympathetic treatment of one another, was the law for all. In the house were many wretched cripples, whose deformities and oddities often rendered them ludicrous, and provoked laughter or mimicry, much to the distress and vexation of the afflicted. But Cottolengo could not allow any such annoyance to be given; even to attempt it was an offence in the eyes of the charitable Canon, who was strict in enacting that every one should avoid adding to the humiliation and grief of the sufferers, and strive on the contrary to soothe the pain of their brethren and lighten their load of sorrow. Thus he who was sound of foot, was expected to be a guide to the blind, and the blind was to be a staff for the cripple. They were to consider themselves the sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father, gathered together in His house, eating His bread, and clothed with the garments He provided for them, owing one another respect, love, kindness, sympathy, and mutual forbearance, and entertaining the highest regard for the good name and reputation of all,

even of the little children, for, as he used to say: "Even the little ones possess the most delicate feelings, and are as sensitive about their reputation as the old folks."

He was at times compelled by his office to safeguard domestic discipline by administering prompt rebuke, and imposing necessary penances, but his admonitions were so sweet and so free from harshness that his subjects used to say: "Better to be rebuked by him than to be praised by others." Though quick to repress and punish faults with due severity, he spared the faulty persons; and when it could be done, the offence was often hidden by praise of the offender's good qualities. He scrupulously adhered to this practice, whenever prudence or charity required that Sisters should be removed from one house to another, on account of complaints made about them or owing to faults which they had committed. That their reputation might not suffer, and that they themselves might not be slighted, he would give them a hearty reception, and assign them some honourable appointment in another house. He never listened to tale-bearers or to representations dictated by discontent or malevolence. He recommended prayer and silence, patience and forbearance to all those who held authority, and he never countenanced the false zeal of some Superiors who exaggerated little faults into grave offences, or who were unduly severe upon offenders. Once a Sister, with more mistaken zeal than wisdom, complained of the conduct of a young novice, attributing to frivolity the vivacity which was only the

outcome of high spirits. "Do you know your catechism?" said he to the complainant. "I believe I do," was her answer. "It may be so," rejoined Don Cottolengo, "tell me therefore how should we love our neighbour?" "By doing unto them what we would like them to do unto us." "Well said. Would you be pleased if a complaint such as you make about this novice were made about you? I am sure you would not. Go in peace, and be on your guard."

"If anything happened to mar the joy and cheerfulness which should gladden every heart and beam from every countenance, peace and good harmony must be restored without delay. Let no one wait for an apology, but be the first to offer it, and let every one, before going to his meal, purify his heart from every vestige of resentment or ill-feeling." Of this he never failed to set an edifying example himself. For if he noticed that any one was cool in manner towards him, or betrayed any sign of displeasure, he was the first to make advances and to plead for pardon which humility was willing to crave, but for which his charity never gave cause. By means of these ordinances and practices, the Piccola Casa became the home of charity, peace, and cheerfulness, so that Canon Cottolengo could say with truth: "We are all poor, but we are also all glad in the Lord." They were a happy people, and their happiness was increased by witnessing the charity of their founder, the good-will of the people, and the care of Providence over them.

The Piccola Casa had become the centre towards

which every heart in Turin turned; and the almshouse to which the charitable gave their gifts. It was the pride of the city, and all its inhabitants, from the market-people of the Piazza d'Erbe to the King in his royal palace, felt as if they had a personal interest in it. They responded most generously to the appeals of its founder, and, whenever he went through the Piazza d'Erbe, there was rivalry among the stall-holders, each of whom sought to obtain for himself the honour of his first appeal. Many voices shouted his name, and many hands offered him their best fruit and vegetables for his poor. He never returned to the Piccola Casa without a large supply of provisions, which some faithful attendants helped him to carry; and as he went on his way he smiled on all whom he met, talked pleasantly, gave them his blessing, and offered them a comfortable room in the Piccola Casa, whenever they felt willing to accept his hospitality.

He made use of innumerable little devices to obtain help and food for his institution. Once being at dinner with the Canons of Corpus Christi, they asked him how he contrived to procure the money necessary for the daily expenses of his Homes. He answered, "Here are some treasures of my lords, the poor," and so saying, he displayed a number of gold watches, diamond rings, precious necklaces, earrings, and the like. He soon told how he procured them. For instance, when he met some wealthy gentleman, he asked him what time it was, and would then remark: "Ah, that is

a beautiful watch, a good time-keeper, all solid gold. Can you transform it into bags of rice or boxes of vermicelli? You cannot? I can, provided I be allowed to carry it to the Home;" and the gold time-keeper was transferred to his hands. When stopped in the street by some grandee of the city, and offered a pinch of excellent snuff, he readily remarked on seeing the gold snuff-box that he would be able to change in into meat for his poor, if he could but drop it into the kettle; and thereupon sometimes the snuff-box would change owners. And it was the same with many other articles.

Once, when the Piccola Casa was in great want, he went out, hoping that God would direct his steps and provide for its needs. As he passed by the residence of Signor Luigi Stura, a wealthy and beneficent merchant, who happened to be laid up with gout, it occurred to him to go in and make known his wants. After being courteously welcomed, Don Cottolengo said: "I am calling here not out of courtesy, but for the sake of business. I am haunted by creditors, and I am penniless. I need bread for my poor, and the oven is cold and empty. As I approached your house, the good Spirit seemed to whisper into my ear that I should step in and be hopeful. Now, what do you say, sir?" The merchant looked at him with a smile, and answered: "There is the safe, here is the key; help yourself, and do not be too modest." A large quantity of gold was soon transferred from the coffer to the capacious pockets of Cottolengo, while the merchant laughed heartily, and the Canon was in no hurry to

deprive his generous friend of his profitable enjoyment.

He was not equally successful with another gentleman, by whom he was dismissed empty-handed. "You are but a poor trader," said the venerable priest before leaving; "in two months you shall go hence, and who will enjoy your gold and silver?" Before the two months had passed, the rich and miserly man died, but before dying he atoned for his rudeness to the pious Canon by making a donation of twenty thousand francs to the Piccola Casa.

CHAPTER VIII.

COTTOLENGO AS SUPERIOR.

The Venerable Founder of the Little House of Providence governed it till his death. His aim in government was to inspire his subjects with the spirit by which he was himself animated. Like yielding ware in the hands of Providence, he had no will of his own apart from the Divine will, and no purpose but to glorify God without relying on any contrivance of human prudence, but resting solely on the help of Providence. He was simple and candid in his methods, humble and unaffected, mild and considerate towards his subjects, and full of reverence and charity for all. No wonder then that his government, despite its vast scope, its difficulties, and the attention to details that it involved, proved so pleasant and beneficial to his subjects.

There were not wanting persons who disapproved of his methods, under the mistaken impression that authority cannot exist unless propped up by an assumption of gravity and distant superciliousness. When they condemned his easy familiarity and counselled greater dignity and a more commanding manner, he answered that St. Vincent de Paul,

owing to natural disposition, had followed this method when he was first made Superior, but that he had soon detected his error, and changed his manner to the kind, paternal, easy familiarity which won him the love and confidence of all his subjects. Hence, as one who knew Cottolengo well declared, though he often commanded acts of heroic virtue, no one was ever found unwilling to yield a prompt and cheerful obedience. His valet, Rolando, who attended on him from the foundation of the Piccola Casa to his death, and was a witness of his virtues and a minister of his charity, had often his good-will and patience taxed by his master; but he used to say "that his ways were so winning and his commands so pleasing, that in order to gratify his venerable master he would have walked through fire and brimstone."

It was quite evident that his orders were not the effect of caprice or whim, but expressions of the Divine will. He governed his subjects not in his own, but in God's name. "We are all the humble servants of God," he said. "God alone is the Lord Who rules over us and issues His commands." His sweet, gentle manner of commanding showed how firmly grounded he was in this belief. Whenever he ordered anything he would say, "It is God's will that you do so and so;" or, "If you accept this office, I am sure you will please God;" or, "God demands of you such a sacrifice," and the like. "It was enough," writes Sister Justina, "that he should signify his will to urge us to ready and cheerful obedience; his commands seemed to give

joy and strength; and he was so sure of being obeyed that he scarcely ever gave a thought as to how his orders were carried into execution." He had carefully trained his subjects in the school of obedience, showing them its value and its merit, and teaching them to obey from supernatural motives. "No one goes to Hell," was his often repeated instruction, "who has learnt to obey." He encouraged such Sisters who were too diffident and anticipated failures by saying to them: "Obey, and be sure that God will reward your obedience and supply your deficiency." He was so confident of success that he never hesitated to put in important offices Sisters well grounded in simplicity and obedience, no matter how deficient they might be in mental attainments or other qualifications.

In order to foster in them this spirit of simplicity and obedience, he would often say: "Sisters, discharge your duties with alacrity and cheerfulness, and then think no more about them, looking upon yourselves as useless servants of the Lord. Remember that God alone is the mover of all things, and the doer of all good things. We are like the wooden puppets of the marionette show, as long as a hand from above holds them, they walk, dance, jump, and give signs of life and agility; they personate a variety of characters, now a king, now a clown, are now in glory and now in disgrace, but as soon as the performance is over, they are dropped and huddled together ingloriously in a dusty corner. So it is with us; amid the variety and multiplicity of our duties and offices, we

are held and moved by the hand of Providence; our duty is to enter into its designs and play the part assigned to us, whatever it may be, with peace and confidence, and respond promptly and trustfully to the impulses received from above."

If at times, amidst the manifold cares of his intricate government, he chanced to overlook some duty or to do anything amiss, he was never unwilling to acknowledge his error or neglect. Once, having been detained too long in hearing the confessions of some nuns in a distant convent, he came too late to hear those of the Vincentian Sisters. There was a slight murmur of disappointment among them, one of them in particular giving vent to her vexation by remarking in presence of the girls over whom she presided, that "the Visitation Sisters were dearer to his heart than the Vincentians." The next day the Sister, touched by the silence of the Canon and ashamed of her own unbecoming conduct, offered him an apology. "Your rebuke, Sister," he answered, "was deserved, for I was in the wrong, but you should not have given it in presence of the girls under your charge." He said no more, and dismissed her with his blessing.

It often pleased God to reward the prompt and easy obedience of his subjects with singular favours. Many persons afflicted with spiritual and bodily sufferings, found immediate relief, or were even permanently cured, by complying with his orders. Sister Hermenegilda was told to go to the kitchen to help the cooks in the most laborious part of their work. It was represented to him that she had a

severe attack of fever, and was unable to leave her bed. "Nonsense," answered he, "tell her that I send her my blessing and that I bid her go." She went, and the fever vanished, and her health was restored. Early one morning the Ursuline girls were ready to start for Mass, but they had only one Sister to escort them. On seeing this, the Venerable Father asked what had become of the other Sisters, who ought to be in attendance. Being informed that they were all ill: "Never mind illness," he replied, "go to the dormitory and tell Sister Symphorosa to dress and go to church with the girls; my blessing will do." She obeyed, and no trace of fever remained. Don Perotti, a venerable old priest, who was so severely afflicted with acute rheumatism that he had lost the use of his limbs, had sought refuge in the hospice. One morning, as a large congregation was waiting for Mass, Don Cottolengo was informed that there was no priest to celebrate it. "What?" said he, "no priest? no Mass? How can we disappoint so many good people? Tell Don Perotti to come down and say Mass." The old priest obeyed, and after offering the Holy Sacrifice found that he had recovered the use of his limbs.

At times people found to their cost that it was unwise to disobey his orders and follow their own fancies. Four Vincentian Sisters, with Sister Consolata at their head, were told to go to the Hospital of Sanfrè by stage-coach. Their instructions from their saintly Father, were to make a long stay at Carignano, and not to leave the place before

two o'clock. After their refreshment at Carignano, Sister Consolata proposed that they should start at once, saying: "The sooner we reach Sanfrè, the happier will be the Sisters of that hospital." They all assented, and at one o'clock they were once more on their road. But no sooner had they reached Carmagnola, a lonely, dreary place, than the clouds gathered black and thick, thunder roared, and lightning flashed, and heavy torrents of rain and hail descended. The frightened travellers would fain have sought a shelter from the fury of the storm, but the lonely place afforded none. To add to their distress, the horses would not move a step, in spite of all the efforts of the driver, and the four Sisters were thoroughly drenched with the rain and battered by the hail through the smashed windows of the coach. When they resumed their journey, the time of day told them that if they had obeyed their Venerable Father's orders, the storm would have passed before their arrival at Carmagnola.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE SECRETS OF HEARTS

It was a general impression in the Piccola Casa that nothing was hidden from the Venerable Founder, that he had knowledge of future events, and that he could read into every heart as if it were an unsealed book. Be this as it may, it cannot be denied that he often received warnings, intimations of a supernatural nature, and that in the direction of souls he possessed a science learned neither in schools nor in books. Of this we shall give a few instances.

A man called on him to ask payment for some wood which he had sent. The good Canon was never particular about bills and receipts, paying readily what he owed, when he had ready money, without making further inquiries. His sense of uprightness and honesty made him unsuspicious regarding other people's honesty. But in the present case he had some misgivings, and, fixing his eye on the wood-dealer, he said: "My good friend, were not your pieces of wood very short? Now, mark me well, if such were the case, you do not rob me, but you rob the poor of the Lord." The man's conscience was smitten; he

acknowledged his dishonesty and made ample amends for it.

One night, while all were asleep, he summoned the night-watch to his room: "Take four men with you and go quickly to the House of Hope, for mischief is being done there." On reaching the house, they surprised three burglars who were ransacking clothes-presses and filling their bags with linen. That house was too far away for any eye to see or any ear to hear what was going on there.

Another night, in the year 1838, he bade one of the household hasten to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum; for one of the girls there had taken flight and was in danger of being drowned. The man ran to the spot, and reached the River Dora, which flowed by the convent garden, just in time to save the fugitive from a watery grave.

Two Vincentian Sisters had watched all night by the bedside of an infirm old patient. Before leaving the ward early in the morning, they were asked to get some fresh milk for their patient. They did so, and at the same time drank some themselves. When they saw the holy man on their return to their convent, they were startled by his saying: "Well, well, was the milk you drank at the milkman's shop fresh and sweet?" "How did you come to know that we drank it?" they asked in their turn; "we were so well hidden in a cosy corner that no mortal eye could see us." "I have my whispering angels," he replied, "and they told the tale; and I wish you to remember

that it is unbecoming for good Sisters to go shopping for milk." The lesson was treasured for future guidance.

He once sent for a Sister who had been employed in the hospital dispensary, and told her that she was to go to the Convent of Suffrages. She remonstrated, saying that she had no call to the cloistered life and felt quite a repugnance to the rigours and seclusion of that convent. He, however, insisted upon her going there and she consented to do so. After speaking to her for some time, he said: "I have kept you here for some length of time for your own good; that you might do some penance for such a fault of which you were guilty while in the dispensary." The poor Sister was dumbfoundered, and could not imagine how the holy man had become aware of her fault, for it could not have been seen by human eye, and she had never mentioned it to any one.

A young Sister, who was a great favourite in the convent, on account of her graceful, attractive manners and the exquisite delicacy of her handiwork, had been often reprimanded for her breaches of silence. She attributed the rebuke not so much to her having been in fault as to the dislike which she imagined the Venerable Cottolengo entertained for her; and becoming sad and despondent, she resolved to seek a change of convent. She opened her mind to a pious old gentleman, who was a friend of her family and a frequent visitor at the Piccola Casa. Out of compassion and friendship, he offered to make arrangements for her reception

in a distant monastery. The transaction was kept secret, lest Don Cottolengo might hear of it. But he was not kept in the dark. On meeting the gentleman, he said: "My good old friend, I am sorely vexed with you; why are you plotting to rob the Little House of Providence of that good Sister? I wish you to know that it is God's will that she should remain here among us and not go to the Sisters of St. Joseph." After a while, addressing the perplexed Sister, he said most graciously: "Ah, ah, you were going to befool us and take the wing? No, you shall not do that, for you shall live and die a good religious in this house."

The supernatural illumination which made him aware of the state of souls and gave him a clear knowledge of the innermost secrets of hearts, was, one may say, almost habitual to him. "We can conceal nothing from his piercing eye," said his spiritual children; "we must be the first to manifest our faults to him, for otherwise he will notice them himself. He sees into our hearts, as if they were the surface of a mirror." This light from above was most useful to him in the spiritual guidance of his penitents, or of those who applied to him for counsel, particularly when they were harassed by scruples or temptations.

Thus he would sometimes bid persons go and confess some hidden faults; to others he would say: "You have been to confession lately, but you must go once more, for you forgot to confess what you committed at such an hour." He went to a priest tormented by scruples, who was keeping

away from the altar, and showing him what was passing in his mind and disturbing his heart, bade him offer the Holy Sacrifice without fear. Whenever he saw Sisters timorous about receiving Holy Communion, or keeping away from the Holy Table on account of scrupulosity, he commanded them to put away their scruples and go to Holy Communion. Noticing that one of the Vincentians did not approach the altar, as he was giving Communion, he went out of the sanctuary to take the Blessed Sacrament to her. A young teacher, being accused of doing something likely to disedify her pupils, felt so vexed that she resolved to absent herself from the class-room, but she revealed her purpose to no one. Early in the morning, as she was coming out of the church, she heard some one saying behind her: "Go to the class-room, the Ursulines are waiting for you." She turned and saw the venerable priest; she endeavoured to remonstrate, but to no purpose. "All these things are bubbles," he said; "there is no foundation for them; there is no blame to you; no disedification to others; go and keep quiet." She went and was satisfied.

A young lady in the Novitiate began to waver in her vocation: she wanted to leave, and was uncertain whether she should join a Franciscan Order or return home. Lest want of money might delay the execution of her design, she had concealed sufficient to take her home. Meanwhile her mind was racked by perplexities and fears, but she dared not breathe a word to any one about her

temptation. "Well, my child," said the Venerable Cottolengo, on meeting her, "the Capuchin nuns are very holy and very happy, but you are not wanted among them; God wills that you should be in the Piccola Casa. And, as to that little sum of money, though it is perfectly safe, you will have no use for it, so you might as well give it to your Superior." The temptation disappeared; the perplexed novice regained her tranquillity, but never knew from what source he had gained all that information.

By the help of the light that is given to the holy, and aided likewise by a natural gift of penetration, the Venerable Cottolengo led souls to peace and perfection with wonderful facility and success. He gave instructions, admonitions, and counsel in such a winning and amiable manner, that no one could resist his influence, disregard his commands, or leave his presence with a heavy heart. People said: "When this holy man comes to us, joy, peace, and alacrity come along with him. He possesses a charm for gladdening every heart, and communicating to others the joy with which his soul overflows. His words are few, but they reach the heart and drive away from it the clouds of sadness. The prayers of his blessing are short, but they leave an everlasting impression on every soul. When he speaks, all difficulties disappear; and sacrifices, how hard so ever they may be, become easy. We must own that he always speaks and commands aright, and that God dwells in him."

CHAPTER X.

HIS STRICTNESS IN ADMITTING POSTULANTS.

THOUGH the Venerable Servant of God readily admitted to the Piccola Casa the destitute who sought a home, the sick and infirm who needed nursing in his hospitals, penitents who were striving to rise from sin, and the tempted who were fleeing from its occasions, he was not equally ready to receive those who applied for admission to any of the Religious Congregations over which he presided, unless he saw in them evident signs of a good vocation. He was guided in his decision, not by any human considerations, but by light from above. He often declared that in admitting postulants, or allowing them to take the habit, he obeyed the will of God, Who manifested to him what was His good pleasure. Of this we shall give a few instances.

He had again and again refused to give the habit to a postulant who seemed anxious and worthy to receive it. Many other good Sisters interceded for her; and at last he yielded to their entreaties and granted the favour requested, but he added: "I yield in order to satisfy you, but before long she will return to her home and resume her secular

dress." Before two years had elapsed she changed her mind, left the convent, and re-entered into her family.

Two young women applied to Canon Cottolengo for admission to one of the convents. One of them was fragile and in delicate health, the other was well built and as hardy as a forest-tree. He received the delicate girl and declined to admit the robust applicant. People wondered at his decision, but he satisfied them by telling them that the Spirit of God had guided him.

A young lady, of respectable parentage and promising dispositions, was very anxious to join the Vincentians; but to the surprise of all, her petition was refused. The Sisters deeming this refusal unjustifiable, as involving a loss to the community, asked him the reason of it, seeing that the applicant was gifted with rare qualities of mind and heart. "It is all very well," he answered, "I do not deny any of her good qualities; I know she is very good, but the spirit of the Little House is not in her," and suiting the action to the word, he several times drew his clenched fist to his breast, saying, "Too close-fisted, too close-fisted." His judgment was justified a few years afterwards when she was admitted into the Congregation by his successor, for it then became clear that her natural love of economy was nearly akin to stinginess.

A beautiful, unprotected young girl had found shelter and safety in the Piccola Casa. But before long she grew weary of the monotony of convent life, and began to ask for her former freedom. "I

will send you away," said the pious director, "if such is your pleasure; I will not detain you here by force and against your will; but, mark me well, you shall remain of your own accord, for you are made for this place and God wills that you should be here." She was sent to the church to say some prayers, and there her heart was changed; she entered the Convent of Sufirages, and edified the community for many years by her fervent piety and humility.

A gentleman, a friend of the Venerable Cottolengo's, called on him one day and complained to him of the naughtiness of his only daughter, a child in her eighth year. While her six brothers were gentle and tractable, this little maid was the terror of the house, self-willed and stubborn, indolent and rebellious. Gentleness and severity had alike failed to improve her. "If you send me to a convent I will kill myself," she had said to her parents, when they threatened to send her away from home. "Bring her to me," said Cottolengo, "I will see what I can do for her." She was brought in, though after a hard struggle, and placed before him. He spoke to her kindly, and smiled upon her graciously, placed his hand upon her head and blessed her. Then, stooping down to the child, he whispered some words into her ears and dismissed her. The child was quite changed. After skipping for a while in the grounds, she walked up to her father, and with tears in her eyes, craved his and her mother's forgiveness for all her childish misdeeds, and begged to be allowed to remain with

the Sisters. As she advanced in age her good resolutions became stronger; she took the veil, and assumed the name of Sister Julia; and to the end of her life she edified her Sisters by her piety and austerity. Being asked on her death-bed what the saintly Father had told her, when she was taken to him as a child, she answered: "I know not, but whilst he spoke I felt my heart growing better, and a longing to enter the convent arose within me."

The Venerable Cottolengo was guided by the light of the Holy Spirit, not only in admitting postulants, but also in confirming the purpose of those who were wavering in their vocation, and in his dealing with those who would be unfaithful to it. Two motherless girls had been brought to the orphanage. But soon becoming restless in their new home, and longing for the old one, they teased and worried the Sisters to allow them to return to their father. "Not yet, not yet," answered Don Cottolengo. "You must wait a while longer; there is mischief in the air." Events soon showed what he meant, for within a week from that time the motherless girls were informed that their father was dead and that they had no longer a home.

There was among the daughters of St. Thais a young lady subject to severe epileptic fits. Medical treatment having proved of no avail, the Sisters had recourse to the holy man, who, looking upon the patient and blessing her, said: "Give her the religious habit and she shall be cured." The girl protested against embracing such a manner of life, on account of her delicate health, but he insisted

upon it: "I tell you, in the name of the Holy Madonna, that if you take the habit, you shall have no more of these fits." She obeyed and was perfectly cured. After some time, wishing to join her father in Rome, she put off the habit, against Cottolengo's advice, and made ready for the journey; but no sooner had she put on her secular dress than the epileptic attacks returned, as of old, to her great dismay. She then changed her mind once more, resumed the religious habit, persevered in her vocation, and was not again troubled with epilepsy.

Sister Fides, when a novice, had been strongly tempted to abandon her vocation, and had repeatedly signified to the Venerable Father her intention of doing so. He comforted her, and exhorted her to despise the temptation and be faithful to her call. "God tells me that you are made for this house," said he, with his wonted benevolence. "And this house is not made for me," replied the discontented novice, in a spiteful, vexed tone. "If you go away, you will fall into an abyss of misery and go to the bad." As she persisted in her resolution, he gave her a stern look and put some money in her hands, saying: "Begone then, if such is your stubborn purpose, with a grieving heart your Father has paid your fare on the way to perdition." She paused at these words in alarm and reflected a while. The silver coins seemed to be burning in her hand like coals on fire; she returned them, changed her mind, went back to her cell, and persevered happily in her vocation.

The following instance is a striking warning to those who resist Divine inspirations. A young woman, having been rescued from a life of shame and dissipation, enrolled herself among the penitents. When there she had a dangerous illness, and on her recovery she went to the good Father, to signify to him her fixed purpose of returning to her former manner of life in the world. Prayers, threats, admonitions were unavailing to induce her to remain in the Piccola Casa. "If you are determined to go," said Cottolengo, "I cannot force you to remain, you are free, the doors are open, but you go at your own peril; a sword is hanging over your head." She departed, full of vexation and bent on wrong-doing. Not more than three months after her departure she was picked up in the public street weltering in blood; she had been stabbed to the heart by a dissolute soldier, in a tumult raised on her account.

During the early days of the Institute at Volta Rossa, an accomplished young lady of good birth was admitted among the Vincentians. On her recovery from a dangerous illness, she was persuaded by her parents to go and recruit her health under the domestic roof. Don Cottolengo was much pained and annoyed at the idea of her quitting the convent, and protested against the imprudent measure. "I would prefer to have my heart pierced with a dagger," said he to her parents, "rather than see your daughter out of this place. Calamities, persecutions, and sorrows are in store for her in the dark future. My eyes shall not see

her go out, nor shall my hand bless her." She went. Thirty long years passed away, the Founder of the Little House had gone to his reward, when there came to the Piccola Casa an ugly, ragged old woman, who was lame, deaf, and nearly blind. Her antecedents were a mystery to all, and she would not herself reveal them. But Sister Pia, the Superior or assistant of that house, prompted by feminine curiosity, undertook to find out who the patient was. "Have you not been a religious some time in your past life?" she asked, "and have you no recollection of me? Was not your name Sister Veronica?" "Blessed God," cried aloud the unfortunate woman, "you have mentioned my name! a name which I have sworn to my parents never to reveal to any human being. You said it; I am the poor, wretched, unhappy Veronica. The holy Father's dread prophecy regarding me has been accomplished! My life has been an unbroken chain of woes and calamities. I lost health, beauty, and fortune; my relatives deserted me, calumny stung me, I wept myself into blindness; I became deaf, I am a wreck. I went away against his command; I made light of his warnings, I left without his blessing, and the hand of God has been upon me. I have now only one hope, it is that I may expiate my fault, and win my way to Heaven, not as a Sister, but as a penitent."

The following anecdote is of a more cheerful character. Three orphan sisters had been placed in the orphanage. Two were perfectly contented, the third was restless and miserable, and worried the

Sisters to send her back to her aunt, but declined to give any reason for her discontent. When pressed by Don Cottolengo she opened her heart and informed him that she did not like her new home, because she did not there get either garlic, onions, or polenta. "My good child," answered the Father, "be of good cheer, henceforth you shall have plenty, as much as you like, more than you like." And the girl resigned herself to her lot, when she had been assured that she would have a plentiful supply of polenta, onions, and garlic.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

HIS SPIRIT OF FAITH.

When Father Fontana said, as has been already remarked, that "there was more faith in the soul of Don Cottolengo, than in the whole city of Turin," he may have said what was a fact. His spirit of faith explains his life, and may be called a summary of his virtues. Faith was at once his motive power, the pillar on which he rested in difficulties, his spur in all his undertakings, and the link that united him to God.

"I have been entrusted with a mission by Divine Providence," he said. "I can neither go back nor stand still. Woe be to me if I were to resist the Divine will; I am driven on by it to accomplish what God makes known to me in prayer, it is then that He manifests His will, and bids me execute it with confidence and courage." The venerable priest could not bear to be given credit for any good that was done in the Piccola Casa. "God is all," he said, "I am nothing; to Him be all glory and not to me. Pray well, be good, keep clear of mortal sin, and you shall see wonders. This Home is not Cottolengo's Home, but the Little House of Providence, wherein God will show His mercies and fill the

hearts of those who trust in Him with the most extraordinary blessings."

We have already seen that Cottolengo received the poor and afflicted into the Piccola Casa as messengers from and representatives of our Divine Lord Himself; and in order to keep alive this spirit in the hearts of the Sisters, he often reminded them that Jesus Christ alone must be before their minds in all their works of charity, their only comforter in sorrow and discouragement, their eternal reward in the life to come. He would say: "Remember that Divine Providence has even now bestowed upon you a singular honour and precious grace in calling you to be the servants of these our masters and lords. Let us therefore approach them with all the kindness and attention which they have a right to receive as the images and representatives of the adorable Person of Jesus."

His spirit of faith appeared also in his dealings with the benefactors of the Piccola Casa. Of course he was grateful for their gifts, and was careful to let them know how deeply he appreciated their charity. In fact, the *Deo gratias*, the Christian canticle of faith and gratitude, was the unceasing prayer of the Piccola Casa, for all things good and bad, pleasant or unpleasant, were welcomed with a hearty "Thanks be to God." But with individual benefactors he was not demonstrative or lavish in expressions of gratitude. He looked not so much at what they did or gave, as at the bounty of God, Who sent them as the ministers and stewards of His providence. God alone was the great

Benefactor, they were the mere channels of God's goodness, by means of which the stores of the Piccola Casa were filled with God's gifts. It seemed to Cottolengo that he was defrauding God of the praise due to Him, if he was too demonstrative in his expressions of gratitude to men. He received the gifts of all alike with a *Deo gratias*, of the poor who contributed a franc, and of Charles Albert when he made his yearly offering of thirty thousand times that sum, of the nobleman who sent a dozen casks of exquisite wine, and of the vegetable vendor who gave him a bunch of carrots. "Let us be grateful," he used to say, "but let us avoid big words and formal demonstrations: God knows all our friends and benefactors, and will reward them. A blessing from God is better than a thousand from any one of us."

God often rewarded alike Cottolengo's faith and the liberality of his benefactors. It is a fact well known in Turin, that all persons who had contributed provisions to the stores of the Piccola Casa, or had worked for it, or were its creditors, or had otherwise come to its assistance, were rewarded with extraordinary prosperity in their own affairs, in the affairs of their families, and in their commercial concerns. In some instances this special favour of Providence was quite remarkable. Once the venerable man asked his brother Louis for ninety francs, of which he was in urgent need, and on receiving it said his usual *Deo gratias*, and added: "Do not begrudge this miserable sum, you will receive the hundred-fold; the bargain is all to your

advantage." And it was so. For after this Don Louis entirely recovered his health, and bidding a hearty farewell to medical men, thus saved the large sums which would otherwise have gone into their purses. Another time, when about to start for the foundation of a branch house, and being short of funds, he asked the loan of a thousand francs from an acquaintance of his. When the money had been counted, he said to the obliging lender: "This is a good bargain for you, my friend; do not forget it, fifty francs for one franc." After a few months, at a sort of Government lottery, the ticket held by this friend made him the winner of fifty thousand francs.

The joy which was a natural result of Cottolengo's spirit of faith, seemed to increase at the approach of the greater festivals of our Lord and His Blessed Mother. "We wrong Providence," he used to say, "by putting on gloomy looks and sad countenances." Of course, at times, unpleasant events and offensive criticism momentarily clouded his brow; no sooner had he raised his heart to God, and considered for Whom he suffered and what his reward would be, than his peace and cheerfulness returned.

The uncertain future never troubled him with anxieties, for he knew in Whom he trusted and Who was his helper. "The bronze and marble monuments of men," he said, "will fall from their solid pillars, but the Piccola Casa will continue to be, five hundred years hence, an object of wonder." "Many names," added he, addressing

Canon Anglesio, "shall fall into oblivion, and many families become extinct; the Piccola Casa shall not perish; it is not the abode of a private family or of an individual, but the House of God." "I know," he continued, "that we are burdened with debts; people think that they will never be paid. What a foolish thought! These debts are not my debts. They are put to the account of Divine Providence; no man shall be a loser. Every farthing will be repaid."

We shall here relate a few of the wonders wrought by the rare faith of the Venerable Cottolengo. Sister Victoria, worn out by an intermittent fever which had reduced her body to a skeleton, had recourse to the servant of God. "Father," she said, "I ask for a blessing on myself and a malediction on this nasty fever." "Have you faith, my child, good, strong, genuine faith?" "My faith is as firm as a rock." "What shall I do with your fever?" "Cast it into the River Dora." "Yes, into the Dora, hence into the Po, and then into the sea, never to come back." He blessed her, and she was never again attacked by it. Sister Pia, being afflicted with a similar complaint, sought relief from her spiritual doctor, in whose power she had more faith than in all the skill of medical men. "Have faith, strong faith, the best of faith, and you shall see what it can accomplish." He dismissed her with his blessing, and she was never again troubled by the malady.

The following words may illustrate his manner of stirring up his spirit of faith in others. "When

you were far from this place, you used to fancy that Cottolengo was the big gun of this institution, that all its burden rested on his shoulders. Now you have found out your mistake, and have seen how God's hand is doing everything. We are nothing but mere children, playing with trifles. I have no more to do with the management of this house than I have with the growth of trees, flowers, and fruits. When we are hungry and the stores are empty and the fire-place cold, God sends us bread and meat. Kind Providence, not Canon Cottolengo, watches over the Piccola Casa and provides for it. She is the tender Mother who has care of us. Trust therefore in God's Providence, and you will see wonders done in our favour. He has done so in the past, He will do so in the future. Abandon yourself into His arms without fear and misgiving. Live in the presence of God, with the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary at your side, and her scapular hanging from your neck, and then go in the midst of fire and war; you shall always be victorious."

CHAPTER II.

HIS LOVE OF GOD.

THROUGHOUT this history, the reader must have noticed that fervent charity burnt brightly in Cottolengo's heart, over which God alone held sway, to which no creature ever found access unless it came in God's name, and claimed entrance for His sake. *Charitas Christi urget nos* was the motto seen on every wall of the Piccola Casa, on the silver hearts worn by the Vincentian Sisters, and on the bright badges that formed part of the habit of the other religious men and women connected with the Home of Providence. As to Cottolengo, he bore this device deeply engraved upon his heart, over which he watched so carefully, lest the breath of sin might extinguish in it the flame of charity, that, as he himself declared in one of those sudden outbursts of devotion, during which the soul discloses secrets which its humility would fain conceal, he had never lost his baptismal innocence or broken his alliance of charity with God.

The Piccola Casa was built, not so much for nursing the sick, harbouring the aged, or affording refuge to the young, as for the sake of establishing

a sanctuary wherein men's minds should be taught to know and their hearts to love God's goodness. Thus the Little House of Providence may be called the House of Love.

Cottolengo loved God with a supreme, devoted, zealous love, which embraced whatever relates to God, His service, and His glory. What pleases God, also pleased him. Hence his great love and reverence for the Church of Jesus Christ, and His Supreme Pontiff and Vicar on earth. As he rejoiced in the triumphs of the Church and her prosperity all over the earth, so he sorrowed in her sufferings and labours among her enemies. He highly esteemed her ministers who labour in her service and seek to extend her kingdom, and he was ready to follow in their footsteps if such were God's pleasure. He used to say: "I am a priest of the Church, and I have at heart no other interests than hers. I have enlisted under her banner, and I am bound to fight and die for her, as a valiant soldier fights and dies for his king." He had deep veneration and warm affection for the Supreme Pontiff, who had been chosen to guide her to her grand triumph in the midst of men and nations, and he would say: "In all controversies concerning the pontifical authority, my custom is to hold those opinions which are most honourable to the Holy See and most approved by the Supreme Pontiff."

He realized the sanctity of the churches wherein God is worshipped and where Jesus Christ dwells among men in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist. His whole demeanour in church bore

witness to his profound reverence before God and to his love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He jealously watched over the cleanliness and neatness of the churches and chapels of the Piccola Casa, and spared no expense in their decoration. "Economy at home in our houses is praiseworthy; it is misplaced in the churches of our God and Lord, and is an outrage offered to His Divine Majesty." Again: "We may put up with poverty in regard to our persons, but not in what refers to the Divine worship." When near our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament he was at home, and he was often drawn thither by faith and love. He used to spend many hours before the tabernacle, as the servant before his master, the soldier before his captain, the vassal before his king, the priest before the high-priest, firing his soul to do something for His glory. "I should be a coward, if in presence of so much love and such sublime greatness, I remained idle, and if I strove not to repay the sweet love of my Saviour with my earnest affection. I must so live that Christ may be manifest in me, and that I may be the means of spreading around the good odour of Christ." Before the altar, he would often repeat one of his favourite aspirations: *O bel Paradiso, O brutta terra!*—"How beautiful is Heaven, how vile is earth!" He liked to see the altar of the Blessed Sacrament made of precious materials and richly decorated. "For this is the palace-hall," he used to say, "wherein Jesus gives audience, and the throne whereon the King of kings sits in the midst of His subjects."

He never failed to celebrate daily the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and had no excuse for the lukewarmness of priests who were remiss in saying Mass, or who easily omitted it. To some good priests who, out of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament, abstained from saying Mass on some days of the week, he would say, "On those days in which reverence keeps you from saying Mass, say it out of love." His Mass was not long, but when at the altar his movements were marked by love and reverence. People who were present used to say: "When Cottolengo offers the Holy Sacrifice, he looks more like an angel than a man." He made a long preparation and thanksgiving, during which he would not allow of any interruption. Before Mass he observed the strictest silence and recollection, saw no one, did no business, and attended to no worldly cares. Sometimes, he would keep ladies and gentlemen of rank, sent to him with messages from the royal palace, waiting in the reception-rooms, saying: "Let us first pay our homage to God, and afterwards give our attention to men."

His fervent love made him ever perfectly resigned to the Divine will. As we have already remarked, he never undertook anything of importance, without having ascertained God's will; then he set to work with undaunted energy, and never rested till the matter was accomplished. He was executing God's will, not his own; he was therefore unmoved and undisturbed, whether success or failure was in store for him. So great was his conformity to the Divine will, that he often remarked

"that were he to know that it was the Divine will that he should quit the Piccola Casa, never to return, or that he should tear down its walls with his own hands, he would obey without an instant's delay." "In the discharge of my duties," he said to Father Albert, "I often find myself on a bed, not of roses, but of thorns: but when I think that God wills it so, I am perfectly contented."

Our venerable Canon was a man of prayer, because he was a man of love. He prayed much because he loved much. He often spent the whole night in prayer, retiring for this purpose to a tribune, where unseen and unsuspected he could see the altar and pour out his heart before the Blessed Sacrament. He prayed when he travelled and when he was quiet at home. *Deo gratias, In Domino, Sit nomen Domini benedictum*, were always on his lips. At home he never absented himself from the community prayers. Some one said to him that, as he was so burdened with external affairs and had so many irons in the fire, his mind must be a torrent of distractions; he answered: "Nay, I am never troubled with distractions; when at prayer, I do not even remember that the Piccola Casa is in existence. I never give it a thought."

One day he was expected at Court at a stated hour for a private audience with the King. He was late, and he knew it, but he would neither interrupt nor shorten the Office that was being said in choir. "I may be at Court in time," he said, "but if I am late, it does not much matter. The good King who is so fond of me to-day, may take

a dislike to me to-morrow. Better for me to adhere to my Heavenly King, He will never desert me."

At times God manifested His Divine pleasure in His servant's prayer and love by signs that are reserved for His chosen servants. We learn from eye-witnesses that Cottolengo was not seldom seen rapt in ecstasy, his body following the fervour of his soul in her flight to meet her God. Sister Crescentina and Sister Telesphora bear witness that they had seen him raised above the floor, his arms outstretched, his eyes fixed, now on the crucifix, now on the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his countenance beaming with a heavenly light, and his lips moving in silent prayer, or uttering words of mysterious meaning, while a voice from above seemed to be speaking to him and answering him. When he discovered that these heavenly favours were known to these Sisters, he enjoined silence on the matter, and bade them never to refer to it. Sister Crescentina obeyed, but Sister Telesphora, fearing to rob her father of the glory to which he was entitled, and to deprive the Sisters of this edifying story, or herself of the consolation of imparting it, made known to every one what she had witnessed.

CHAPTER III.

HIS DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

One of the features of Christian sanctity is strong, tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Venerable Cottolengo holds a prominent place in the army of Mary's devout clients. As we have said elsewhere, he proclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary Patroness and Mistress of the Little House of Providence, under the title of Our Lady of Providence, and as such she was venerated and invoked all over the institution. An oil-painting of the Mother of Mercy was exposed over the chief door of each house, convent, and college. At the main entrance a statue of the Holy Mother holding the Infant Jesus, occupied a rich shrine. Here the applicants for admission placed themselves under her protection, and here, when they were dismissed, they knelt to thank her for her mercy and implore her blessing.

Those who have visited this immense Home of Christian charity, assert that it is, as it were, a gorgeous sanctuary, raised to the honour of Mary by the piety of the Venerable Joseph Cottolengo. It is everywhere evident that she is its Queen and

Mother. On one side is seen the House of the Madonna, on another the House of Bethlehem; here the Home of the Sacred Family, there the Home of Mary's Spouse. Many of the religious families and pious asylums that belong to the Piccola Casa take their names from the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus we have the Brothers of the Holy Rosary, the Sisters of Mount Carmel, the Daughters of Pity, the Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess, and others, all pious reminders of the maternal love of the Virgin Mary. Even the dispensary was consecrated to the Mother of Jesus, under the invocation of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Throughout this Home of charity resounded the praises of Mary, and Cottolengo rejoiced to see so many souls burning with love for our Blessed Mother, and to hear so many voices invoke her aid.

In his private and public discourses, he spoke enthusiastically of the exalted dignity and eminent sanctity of the Holy Mother of God, and in doing so he could seldom repress his tears. "Our greatest joy," he often repeated, "is to have for our Mother Mary, a Mother so sweet and gracious to all. Oh, what would become of poor sinners, were it not for our good Mother." He honoured his *Buona Madonna* with special homages every day. The aspiration he so often repeated was echoed by everybody: "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, help us to become saints." Before leaving his room he would ask Mary's blessing, kneeling before her picture. "A mother's blessing," he said, "is a precious treasure." This was a practice which he commenced in boy-

hood and continued till his last illness. He liked to pray before the altars of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and took care that they should be tastefully adorned with a profusion of fresh flowers. These were mostly gathered from a spot called the Madonna's Garden, which he had filled with a variety of plants whose blossoms were reserved for our Lady's altar. He often went to pray at the shrine of Our Lady of Grace, or in the Sanctuary of the Consolata, for, as he said: "At home they do not allow me to pray, only here I can pray quietly and undisturbed, and here my good Mother and Queen seems to be more willing to help me." And he did indeed feel over him the protecting hand of Mary, for, as he often said, he had never prayed for favours through the intercession of his Holy Madonna without obtaining them. Whenever he was annoyed by opposition from without, or by the importunity of unrelenting creditors, he had recourse to the protection of the sweet Mother and Patroness of his institution, and he went away from his prayers with the certainty that they had been granted.

After the honour and glory of God nothing was nearer to his heart than the honour and glory of our Blessed Mother. Having to take from Cavoretto to Turin, a distance of three miles, a beautiful statue of our Lady, which had been given to him, he resolved that the journey should be a fitting tribute to Mary's queenly dignity. Accordingly he had the statue placed on a conveyance richly decorated with tapestry and damask, garlanded

with flowers and decorated with gold fringe, while he and Canon Anglesio sat at each side as guards of honour. It was thus taken into Turin, and was received with shouts of joy and hymns of praise by the inmates of the Piccola Casa.

On one of the many altars which adorned the institution there was a picture of our Lady which was held in high veneration by the inmates. It had been presented to the Canon by a pious benefactor and was the work of a celebrated Italian painter. King Charles Albert expressed his desire to become the owner of it, on account of its artistic value; but a respectful refusal from Cottolengo met the royal request, and no price was accepted for it. "Tell the King," such was his message, "that here we often pray before this dear Madonna, who is much honoured by us, and that we shudder at the idea that the picture should hang in the royal gallery, side by side with profane paintings." The King, having assured the Venerable Canon that the coveted masterpiece would adorn, not a gallery, but his royal apartment, and hang over his couch, his request was granted and the picture found its way to the royal palace. Some time afterwards the King said, when conversing with Dr. Granetti: "Have the kindness to tell that good soul, Canon Cottolengo, that his Madonna is most dear to me, that it hangs over my bed, and that faithful to my word, I say my morning and night prayers before it."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY ANSWERED HIS PRAYERS.

In the Venerable Cottolengo were verified the words of Blosius, that "the Virgin Mary never overlooks her clients, nor denies her favours to any one, but is always ready to clasp in the arms of her pity those who flee to her, and to pour sweet consolation into every heart, rewarding with her maternal assistance even the faintest prayers." The holy Canon was often heard to say: "I obtain whatever I wish from the Holy Madonna; she is so good and kind, that she never refuses me her favours." The Piccola Casa daily experienced that the Virgin Mary was its powerful Patroness and the golden channel of God's blessings. We shall here relate a few instances of her maternal care of the Piccola Casa, and of her benignity in answering the prayers of its saintly founder.

In the autumn of the year 1839, Sister Fiorina came to tell him that there was no flour in the house, and that unless he sent for some, there would be no bread for the inmates.

"It is too late," he answered, "too late; go in peace and do not trouble. How can we send for

flour while it is raining in torrents?" Then, leaving his room, he went to one of the refectories, and, locking the door after him, fell on his knees before the image of the Blessed Virgin. Inquisitive eyes at the keyhole, saw him with outstretched hands and uplifted eyes, begging for bread for his dear children. His prayer was soon heard, for a cart-load of flour entered the yard. The driver took out the horses, and leaving behind him the cart and its load, went away without giving his own or any other name. The flour was gladly received, but how the cart afterwards disappeared during the night no one could ever tell.

The Sister who superintended the kitchen, once said to him that there would be no soup that day, as there was nothing to make it with. "Never mind," he said, "but we must do our best. Call such a Sister and go with her to your Madonna's shrine, light a taper before it and recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I will pray with you." Their prayer was scarcely ended when fifteen sacks of rice were left by an unknown person at the gate of the Home.

A tradesman who had supplied Cottolengo with a large quantity of goods called on him to ask for a settlement of his account. The holy man, who was unable to pay, tried to put him off with kind words, and asked him to wait a while longer and have patience. "Yes," answered the tradesman, "I will wait, but I can no longer have patience; and the money must come before I go." Seeing the man's determination, Cottolengo knelt before the statue

of the Blessed Virgin Mary which had been brought from Cavoretto. He remained a while in prayer, and was suddenly startled by a soft voice, which seemed to bid him look up. As he did so, he saw to his surprise, at the feet of the statue, a large roll, containing more money than what was needed to satisfy the importunate creditor.

A person to whom Cottolengo owed a large sum of money, was insisting on prompt payment, and trying to enforce his claim with harsh words and angry threats. "Why do you lose your temper, my good friend?" said Cottolengo; "your anger will not bring you your money. Come with me to the good Madonna, she will help us both." As they were reciting the Litany of Loreto, a messenger left at the door two bags full of gold and silver, and went away without giving the donor's name.

One night in November, 1839, being hard pressed for want of money, he was praying before the statue of his *Buona Madonna*. "Will not the good Mother help us?" he said to one of the servants who happened to be in his room, and rising, he went out with his companion in spite of the heavy rain which was flooding the streets, to look into the alms-boxes at the different gates of the Home. To his companion's amazement, they were found filled with gold, though a little while before they had been empty.

One day some of the Sisters saw him return home hurriedly, after a very short absence, and were alarmed to see him pale and trembling with fear. He had been suddenly met by one of his

creditors, who was not satisfied with abusing him, but had likewise severely assaulted him. He retired to his room, and gave orders that he should be left alone. Soon however Sister Gabriel, the portress, came to his door, saying that a beautiful, noble-looking lady wished to see him. "She knows all about you and must speak to you," added the portress. Don Cottolengo received the stranger and was much consoled by her words. Before leaving she placed a precious ring in his hands, saying: "With the price of this you can pay some of your debts; the rest you will soon be able to defray from a different source." When Sister Gabriel asked him who the lady was, he answered: "Such ladies do not come from here below, but from above. That lady was the Holy Madonna."

CHAPTER V.

HIS HUMILITY.

THE establishment of the Piccola Casa had drawn attention to the Venerable Joseph Cottolengo, and made him an object of praise and admiration. But he shrank from notice and commendation, and strove to hide from men the good works which were done for God alone. His lively faith helped him to realize his own nothingness in God's sight, and to esteem others as the images and representatives of God. His reverence for, and obedience to, ecclesiastical authority was most edifying, and he never undertook anything without the sanction of his Archbishop. The voice of his confessor was to him as the voice of God Himself, and when under the spiritual direction of Father Girò, of the Oratory of St. Philip, a pious but severe priest, he submitted readily to his decisions and never acted against his advice. Hence he refused to hear the confessions of the Vincentian Sisters, and he often went home without confession when he had been prevented from going to his confessor at the time that had been appointed for him. He never aspired to ecclesiastical offices or honours, and he took every opportunity of abasing himself before others. Thus

he would let people know that he was of poor parentage, and that he had learnt the rudiments of letters in a stable among donkeys and cows. As far as he could he shunned praise and applause, and declined to take visitors over the Piccola Casa, lest while admiring the establishment they should also admire its founder. People were quick to notice the pious stratagems by which he sought to draw upon himself contempt and ridicule, but instead of despising him they called him a true disciple of St. Philip Neri. Sometimes he would try to silence his admirers by drawing their attention to other matters with a witty remark or an amusing anecdote, or even by doing something clownish and clumsy. He used to speak of gambling and drinking as if they were his ordinary practices. He would carry on his shoulder a vegetable basket or a wine-cask, and stroll about the grounds of the Home; or he would use the labourer's spade and the carpenter's tools, or work with the bricklayers. Once he was seen walking home with two enormous artichokes under each arm. Such are some of the devices by which he tried to lower himself in the opinion of men, and sometimes he played his part so well that persons unacquainted with him would remark: "This priest is nothing more than any other priest; there are hundreds as good as he in the city."

His humility showed itself likewise in his walk, in his dress, in his speech, in the tone of his voice, and in his every movement; his every word and action manifested contempt of self and the desire to be despised by others. He wore on his breast the

ribbon and cross of the Order of St. Mauritius and St. Lazarus, out of consideration for the good King who had given him the decoration; but, as he remarked, "he wore it only because it was a cross, were it a star or a crown he would set it aside." When any one pointed to the grand monument raised by his zeal and charity, he would say: "There is nothing of mine in the work; Providence built it, and when I shall be no more, then you will behold its wonderful growth." If he happened to be in the wrong or do anything amiss, he was prompt to take the blame and to offer an apology. Once in the pulpit he begged pardon of the congregation for being late in coming to the altar; "I am sorry to talk so much about goodness and to practise it so little. I preach exactitude to others, and fail in it myself." Another time he sent for a Sister late at night, and apologized to her for some sharp remarks he had uttered in her presence. "Unless I apologize to-night," he said, "I should not dare to go to the altar to-morrow morning."

In Cottolengo's heart there was no room for anger or resentment. In his own eyes he was inferior to all, how then could he bear ill-will or cherish resentment against any one? If it sometimes happened that, through spite or ignorance, persons abused and insulted him, a momentary sign of indignation betrayed the wound given to natural feeling, but in a few seconds peace was restored to his mind and serenity returned to his countenance. Once a patient who had an imaginary grievance, left the hospital abruptly, abusing its founder. A

few days later he begged to be readmitted, and his request being granted, he was greeted by the servant of God with his accustomed cheerfulness as if nothing unpleasant had happened. Some few persons occasionally went so far as to give him violent blows. He took no notice of such treatment, and, when remonstrated with on his over-indulgence, he answered: "It behoves us not to be over-sensitive, let us keep quiet and go on cheerfully in the Lord. Jesus Christ, Who was holiness itself, suffered worse treatment than this." Once, when he was going to preach on a festival-day, he found on the pulpit an anonymous letter couched in the most insulting language. He read it attentively, and guessing from the ill-disguised hand who the writer was, he told him never to act thus again lest he should offend God, and having done this he began his sermon with his usual calmness and serenity.

A gentleman of Turin had for some cause a grudge against the servant of God. He could not even bear to see him, and took every opportunity of venting his wrath and loading him with abuse. Cottolengo saluted him courteously in the street as if he were his best friend, but only to be repaid in public with the most insulting abuse. He nevertheless continued to salute him kindly whenever he met him, and gave him every token of friendship. "Let him alone, and pass him by without noticing him," said Father Albert; "treat him as he treats you, and be content to love in your heart." "By no means; such conduct would be unwise and un-Christian. Sweetness and kindness soften the

hardest hearts, and I must overcome evil with good." And he did overcome evil with good; for after a while, the angry man acknowledged his error, begged Cottolengo's pardon, and became one of his most devoted friends.

Cottolengo's humility was united with beautiful candour and simplicity. He knew neither artfulness nor insincerity, and was singularly innocent and simple. Thus he could never be a man of two measures and two standards. Yes and no on his lips meant yes and no. He spoke in the same manner to the poor and to the rich, and always simply and directly. He made himself all to all, giving his services to all without distinction, and allowing himself to be approached by all. It never occurred to him that others could act otherwise than he did. He credited every one with candour and honesty. Thus, in settling accounts he did not care to take a receipt. He knew he would not cheat any one; how, then, could any one cheat him? "Are they not all Christians and gentlemen?" Being sometimes in a hurry to send money to some branch house, he would entrust the sum to the first stranger who happened to be going in that direction. Once he was himself taking some money to the Asylum of Racconizi, when he met on the way a cart driven by a stranger. "You are going to Racconizi, my friend, are you not? *Deo gratias.* Please deliver this packet to the Sisters; they are in great need of it, they will be glad to get it, and you will save me time and trouble." The carter took the money and delivered it safely, admiring

the simplicity of the priest who placed so much confidence in the honesty of a stranger.

In the year 1834, or thereabouts, the French Society, Monthyon and Franklin, which had been instituted for the purpose of making publicly known the names of great benefactors of humanity, decreed to Don Cottolengo the large gold medal and first prize of that year. It was sent through the Sardinian Ambassador, and the King deputed his two sons to deliver it to the honoured founder of the Little House of Providence. The holy man, hating notoriety, complained that he was not allowed to enjoy peace in obscurity. He told the royal Princes that he accepted the gold medal as a homage paid to Divine Providence, and he thanked the French donors, acknowledging their gracious gift as a recognition of the great merits of St. Vincent de Paul, the protector of the Piccola Casa. His friends rejoiced at the honour paid him, and wished to see the precious medal, but he dismissed them without gratifying their curiosity. "It will be more profitable to you," he said, "to look at the medal of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The only persons who were privileged to look at it and have it in their keeping, were the Jewish pawnbrokers when they held it in pledge for money lent to Don Cottolengo.

CHAPTER VI.

POVERTY, PURITY, AND MORTIFICATION.

A MAN so perfectly schooled in the virtue of humility, and so utterly dead to himself, could not allow his heart to be attached to those earthly things which engross the attention of worldly people; and it is not surprising, therefore, that the Venerable Servant of God was characterized by the love and practice of poverty.

He never possessed or sought wealth, nor did he trouble himself about family affairs, being indifferent both to their success and their failures. All his rights and claims to the paternal inheritance he made over to his brothers, and begged them never to speak of his father's last will. He was the founder of the poorest institution under the sun, and was contented to dwell in it as "the poorest man of Turin." "If the Pope were to appoint me to a rich bishopric or the King to a dukedom, I should not feel as happy and as rich as I am now, in the midst of my poor. The Piccola Casa is my gold-mine, its poverty my riches." His room was small and meanly furnished. Once a pious person furnished it better, and added some comforts to it during his absence. On his return, he ordered

all the new things to be removed and distributed among the poor. His clothing, though clean and becoming to a priest, was poor and worn; and he was often obliged to borrow a cloak or soutane when he had to go to Court or to attend the solemn services of the Cathedral. Whenever he got new clothes he at once gave them away to the poor, who always had the best of what he could give. When he had nothing else to give, he stripped his bed of the sheets and blankets; and when he could not go to the poor at the gate, he threw to them from the window whatever came first to hand. Sometimes he would return home barefoot, and beg for a pair of shoes, remarking that he could not keep his own, as our Lord had borrowed them from him. A worthy shoemaker, being in great distress on account of slackness of trade, applied to him for assistance. He gave him his watch, which was the only article of value he possessed. It was received gratefully, and kept reverently as the relic of a saint, and it passed from the shoemaker to his son. Cottolengo never kept anything that had been given to him for his own use, because, as he used to say, he was not the owner of anything, but the steward of Providence, to distribute its good gifts to others. When counselled to look to his own interests, and provide against unforeseen emergencies, his reply was, that he had no interests of his own, and that he needed nothing for himself; and that in his last sickness he wished for no greater comfort than a bed in the wards among the poor, and a share in their medicines and treatment.

He was very sparing in the use of paper, and often wrote either on the cover of letters, or on any blank half-sheet cut off from them. Baron Raffo, of Chiavari, having once visited the House of Providence, asked for a sheet of paper before taking leave of Don Cottolengo. "We have plenty of paper, and will gladly accommodate you, Signor Baron," he said, and, tearing from an old letter a blank half-sheet, he handed it to him. The Baron asked for something better, and was given a sheet of wrapper-paper from the dispensary. He wrote on it, and gave it back to the Canon, who found it to be a cheque for several thousand francs. He thanked the donor, and smilingly said: "Signor Baron, we have piles of such paper, and when you again wish to scribble over it in this fashion, we will gladly furnish you with it."

We have already said, that even from his earliest years Don Cottolengo was a fervent lover of the virtue of charity, and a zealous champion of its beauty and value. His companions called him an angel, and his after life well warranted his right to this name. In conversation he was always reserved and delicate, and he exacted a like modesty from others. Even in preaching, his hearers admired his delicacy of language, his modesty of demeanour, and his fervour in speaking of the angelic virtue. They would say of him: "He spoke to us, but he did not look at us; hardly any one can tell what is the colour of his eyes."

Women were excluded from his room when he was there; if they came with a message, he received

them at the door: and if they had to arrange his room, they were asked to wait until he had gone out. Rolando, his faithful old servant, was often his companion when he visited the poor and the sick. When he had to speak to any of the Sisters, he did so in the gardens or in the courtyards. His letters to them were as short as possible. He never felt the pulse of sick persons. Once one of the Ursuline girls met him as he was going to his room, after an absence of several days, and in her childish joy to see him back, laid her hand on his shoulder. His cheeks reddened, and he rebuked her most severely, adding that were he not aware of her simplicity and innocence, he would have dismissed her from the Home. He used every means to promote love of the angelic virtue; for the House of Providence over which God ruled, must be the sanctuary of purity and the abode of the pure.

On every side pictures and statues of the Virgin Mother of Purity, seemed to remind every one of the priceless value of purity, of the love that God has for it, and of the rich reward that awaits it. His exhortations to religious concerning modesty may be summed up in these few words: "Head erect, and downcast eyes, for modesty nestles not in stooping heads, but in closed eyes."

In order to guard his purity, Don Cottolengo was mindful of Christian mortification. It was difficult for those unacquainted with his manner of life to believe that a man of his vigorous health and constitution, and burdened with so many works and responsibilities could be severe in the treatment

of his body, and that his genial manner and strong play of humour veiled rigorous self-restraint and penance. Before imposing any form of corporal penance on others, he was wont to do himself what he enjoined on them.

He had detached himself from all created things, even from his own relatives, whom he never visited, and to whom he never wrote. Thus when travelling through his native place, he deprived himself of the consolation of visiting his aged parents. He said: "I preach detachment to others, ought I not to set an example of it?" He could hardly be stricter than he was in the government of his senses. "I am of a fiery and sanguine temperament," he said, "so that I must exercise constant self-control and treat myself hardly, lest my passions get the upper hand, and unfit me for my many duties." His food was of the coarsest quality, and he contented himself with two scanty meals a day. A piece of brown bread, such as is given to Italian soldiers in the barracks, formed his breakfast; an onion, a herring, and some unsavoury salad, were enough for his dinner. When he travelled, he took with him his loaf of brown bread. When at home, in order to conceal his mortification, he ordered that the priests in the Piccola Casa should dine in a common refectory, but that each one should have a table to himself. But even so, his abstinence could not escape observation. He therefore tried another plan. He had dinner served in covered dishes, and whilst those given to the others were filled with good food, his was laid before him empty.

He declined invitations to dinner-parties, saying they were too great a luxury for him, and adding: "How could I accept such invitations? Should not donkeys feed on oats and nettles?" When exquisite wines and delicacies were sent to him, he distributed them among the poor of the hospitals. He was fond of strolling in the gardens, and gathering flowers for our Lady's altars, but would never indulge himself by smelling them. He slept only a few hours every night, and seldom on his bed; sometimes he would sleep in his arm-chair, sometimes on the bare floor, and often without removing his day garments, so that he might be sooner ready for work in the morning. His other bodily penances were exceedingly severe.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW GOD GLORIFIED HIS SERVANT.

FROM Cottolengo's life we can see how, while he raised in honour of Divine Providence a spiritual stronghold in the city of Turin, wherein all classes of the needy should find a refuge, he concealed his own share in the work, and strove to be hidden and forgotten. He was unwearying in giving to God all the credit of the grand foundation, saying that it was not the work of human skill, but of the Divine interposition, that God was its architect and builder, he but a servant and labourer. So firm was he in this belief that he would not carry the latch-key of the Home, saying, that latch-keys were not for the servants, but for the masters, and that not he, but Divine Providence, was the Lord and owner of the House of Providence.

And God in His turn glorified His holy servant. He was the pride of his fellow-citizens in the Sardinian metropolis, and his renown spread far and wide throughout Italy. Pope Gregory XVI. and Pope Pius IX. esteemed him highly, and pronounced him a man of an admirable life and extraordinary sanctity. Gregory XVI. honoured him with a special medal, and Pius IX., speaking to

Don Anglesio, said: "Canon, you are the successor of a saint." Mgr. Fransoni, Archbishop of Turin, revered him as a saint, honoured him with his confidence, showed him many favours, and gave liberal alms to his institution. King Charles Albert, who had the highest esteem for him, conversed with him in terms of intimacy, called him his best friend, told him his difficulties and sorrows, and begged his prayer for himself and the royal family. On the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Savoy with the Archduchess Raineri, the King called Don Cottolengo to bless a richly-carved silver crucifix which he was going to present to the royal couple, and in giving it to them, he asked them to keep it as a precious treasure sanctified by the blessing of a saint. Ladies and gentlemen of rank sought his counsels for their guidance, and for his sake visited the poor and the sick in the Piccola Casa.

God granted to His servant the gift of healing. The doctors who attended the patients were eye-witnesses of many cures effected by him, and became so used to them, that they often trusted more in his blessing than in their own medicines. The following are a few instances.

Count Clement Solaro della Margarita, a generous benefactor of the Little House of Providence, promised to help Cottolengo and his Home with liberal donations on the condition that he should obtain the recovery of his wife who was the victim of an intermittent fever which was breaking down her constitution. "I accept the condition," answered

Cottolengo; "the fever will never recur, but mark well, though free from it, she will never be a model of good health." And as he had said, so it happened.

A little girl of three, a cousin of Don Cottolengo, was afflicted with severe arthritic pains which caused her to scream incessantly. She was brought to him after the medical men had in vain tried all their skill on her case. Sister Massima took the child into Cottolengo's room and left her there. After a few moments he called back the Sister, saying: "Take away this screaming baby; what can I do with it? Take care of the girl, for she shall grow and get strong, and take the veil in a monastery." This prediction was in due time verified.

The same Sister Massima, for whom Cottolengo had the highest regard, after once seeing a priest fall at the altar in a fit of epilepsy, became herself subject to similar fits. Obedient to the Divine will, she bore her affliction without a murmur, grieving only to be a burden to the community, as she was quite unfit for any duty. The servant of God, on meeting her in the Convent of Suffrages, addressed her thus: "I am told, Sister Massima, that your convulsions and screams disturb and annoy the community. Now we must put an end to all this. I give you my blessing; my best blessing, and let all your convulsions be gone for ever." She was cured.

The servant of God made use of the wonderful powers vouchsafed to him, in behalf of the House of Providence. In the year 1839, the Sisters in

charge of the wine-cellar found all the casks empty. When they informed Cottolengo that there would be no distribution of wine on that day, he said, "Nonsense, you must give them wine, and there is plenty of it in the cellar. Tap the barrels and draw; there is more wine in them than there is confidence in you." They obeyed, and found a barrel full.

In one of the courtyards there were some geese, which early every morning, as they waddled to a neighbouring pond, caused a great deal of annoyance by their loud noise to the pious people who were at Mass in the chapel. They called the Canon's attention to the disturbance, and requested him to put an end to it. "I will provide," he answered; "I will whisper a little word to them, and I hope they will mind me." Next morning he went up to the geese and addressed them thus: "Your noise is an intolerable nuisance to us all, disturbing our prayers and our devotions. Henceforth you must go to the pond by the path I show to you, two by two, and in silence." They did so, and the disturbance ceased.

In the summer of 1835, as he was passing with Canons Vogliotti and None by a fruit-stand, he bought a small basket of delicious cherries, which, on reaching home, he distributed among a large crowd of poor who had gathered round him, giving a handful to each. The basket, according to the Canons' reckoning, could not hold more than forty or fifty cherries, still the supply seemed never to fail, much to the surprise of his two companions,

who believed that the fruit was multiplied in his hands.

It is also said that on two occasions some of the buildings of the Piccola Casa caught fire. The firemen were promptly on the spot with their engines, but only to find that their services were not needed. The holy man had been there before them, had whispered his prayer, and blessed the blazing buildings, and the fire was extinguished.

His prophetic spirit and his knowledge of hearts were wonderful. By the bed-side of the sick he would often foretell speedy recovery to some who were almost in the grasp of death; and others, about whom no serious apprehensions were entertained, he would warn of their approaching end. To some he would say: "Oh, how beautiful are the courts of Heaven, turn your heart to Paradise," and they would die. To others, "There are many roses and violets for you to pluck in our gardens," and they would recover. Once a young girl, whom the Sisters were preparing for her first Communion, ran to him in tears. She felt home-sick, and missed the merry sports of her companions. "Do not cry; be happy," he said to her; "soon you will, of your own accord, come here to ask for the veil, and become a fervent religious." The event verified the prophecy.

A young man, believing himself to be called to the Capuchin Order, asked Cottolengo for a letter of introduction to the Superior of the Capuchin Convent. The saintly man was of a different opinion, and said, "I will give you the letter, but

I wish you to understand that such is not your vocation. You will not persevere." The young man entered the Novitiate, but after a few months of probation, his health gave way, and he left the convent and embraced the ecclesiastical state, as the Father had foretold.

Long before Canon Anglesio had taken up his quarters in the Little House of Providence, to edify it by his exalted virtues and zealous labours, Don Cottolengo had pointed him out as his successor in its government, and said he would bring to perfection whatever he himself might leave unsettled. And so it happened. He went further; for he also foretold Canon Anglesio's successor. "He who has to mount sentinel in this house of God, sooner or later," said he, "is neither a canon, nor a knight, nor a great luminary in the Church, but a quiet, modest, unassuming guest, and inmate of the Piccola Casa." The much esteemed and eminent priest thus referred to, was Don Dominic Bosso.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS HOLY DEATH.

COTTOLENGO was in his fifty-sixth year, but his constitution was broken by hard labour, austerity, and neglect of his health. Even in the flower of manhood, a premature old age had furrowed his countenance with wrinkles. Now his mission was over, his work completed, his crown ready, and the summons of death was at hand. One day the brave soldier of Christ exclaimed with a faint voice, but a stout heart: "Oh, if I knew how to accomplish something pleasing to God, how willingly I would go to do the work!" and in saying this he dropped down upon a chair exhausted.

He had received warnings from above that his end was nearing, and he made no secret of it. "I feel," he said, "that I am no longer for earth; a voice within me whispers that it is time for me to hide from the gaze of men, and place myself all alone in the arms of God, and after a while . . ." He said no more, his eyes spoke the rest. "Oh, how small and puny," he continued, "is the world around us. Oh, could I sever the bonds that fasten me to it. *O brutta terra, O bel Paradiso!*" Twelve years before his death, he had foretold to one of the

Sisters, that Chieri was the spot whence he should take his flight to Heaven. "This iron bedstead must be forwarded to Chieri, to my brother Louis, for I must die on it." Again, on another occasion, stretching out his trembling hand towards the heights of the Basilica of Superga, he said to Canon Renaldi: "There I shall rest in peace." "What?" asked Renaldi, "will your remains be laid in the tombs of the royal princes of Savoy?" "Not in Superga," said he, "but lower down, at the foot of the grand Basilica;" he meant the city of Chieri, built at the foot of the heights on which rises the majestic mausoleum erected by the Sardinian Kings. "There," said he to another priest, "there I shall rest within a fortnight." In December, 1841, while typhoid fever was ravaging the Piccola Casa, the Venerable Cottolengo said to one of his zealous fellow-labourers: "This is a last Divine visitation to detach me from all created things. It is a warning from God that I should fold my tent, and lay down my weapons, and be ready for my summons which calls me hence; I am going into the house of the Lord."

Towards the close of February, 1842, Father Albert was in Turin on business. Don Cottolengo sent for him early one morning, and greeted him with marks of the tenderest affection. "You will spend to-day with me," he said, "you will say Mass and preach in my place, and give Benediction to the inmates." After sharing his frugal meal and conversing with him intimately, he said towards evening, "Now go back to your convent, we must part; take

with you these pictures of Maria Consolata; let us divide them between us as good brothers. Keep them as a reminder of my affection for you; kneel down, and go with my last blessing." Cottolengo blessed his brother, embraced him, and then dismissed him. Father Albert, who had never before been treated with so much affection by his brother, was moved to tears, and returned to his convent with sad forebodings. It was the last meeting of the two brothers on earth.

Only one spot on earth was dear to his heart. It was the Piccola Casa, which he had founded and cemented, and the prosperous future of which he had foreseen and foretold. Before parting with it, he must speak one last word, and give it his loving blessing. Weak as he was, hardly able to stand, and prostrated by the typhoid fever, which took him to the grave, he dragged himself from one hospital in the Piccola Casa to another, from one spiritual family to another, from one convent to another, giving his last counsels, asking for prayers, exhorting all to sanctity, courage, and perseverance in the spirit of the Piccola Casa, and bestowing on all his paternal blessing. Knowing that his stay was short, and that he would see his spiritual children no more, he spoke to them with burning words of Heaven and its joys, and of eternity and God. In parting from them he told them that he was giving them his last blessing, and that they would see him no more on earth.

It was on the 21st of April, 1842, before starting for Chieri, that he bade farewell to the House of

Providence. He was so feeble, that he had to be carried to the stage-coach. The piazza and vestibule were crowded with people anxious to receive his parting blessing, to see him for the last time, and to hear his last words. "My task is done, my course ended, I am called away. Reduced as I am, I can be no longer of any service to you on earth, but from Heaven, where we can do much, I will befriend you. My heart, my eyes, my love will be with you, and I will pray the Holy Madonna to wrap you all in the folds of her maternal love. Never forget the counsels of the old sentinel of the Little House of Providence; and may my parting blessing be for you all an earnest and pledge of an everlasting blessing that God in His mercy has in store for you." He was gone; many eyes were moist with tears, many hearts were broken with grief. He had gone to Chieri, to die.

On reaching the city of Chieri, he went to the house of his brother, Canon Louis, on the road that leads to the sanctuary of the Annunciation of our Lady, and was laid on the bed which he had sent there twelve years before. His little room was poorly furnished, so that it might resemble his own cell in the Piccola Casa, but he found in it his four favourite pictures, the Crucifixion, Our Lady of the Rosary, the Guardian Angel, and St. Vincent de Paul. It was remarked that after entering into his new quarters he never spoke even in the wanderings of illness, about the Piccola Casa, or about matters relating to it. He had ended his duty there, it had been placed in other hands. A

cup of broth was offered him; he turned away from it, for many years he had not tasted such refreshing drink. He was asked whether he felt comfortable on his new bed. "It is comfortable enough for a poor man who has not laid his limbs on a soft bed for four years," was his answer.

Being asked whether he would allow his friends to call upon him, he said to his brother Louis: "You are with me, and I wish to see no one else. I no longer belong to earth, I must now be with my God. Pray for me, that when I am called away, I may not be burdened with matter for expiation; these last few days we must give to silence, solitude, and prayer." He spoke little, but his few words were a devout canticle of blessings and praises to Divine Providence, for Whose glory he had so strenuously toiled, and into Whose hands he now so confidently gave up his spirit. As to everything else he was calm and resigned, patient and cheerful. His pious murmurings were: "*O Paradiso! O Paradiso!* O Mary, my Mother, I am thine. O Holy Virgin, sweet Madonna, show thyself my Mother." Though his sufferings were intense, he never gave utterance to the least complaint. "Our Lord Jesus," he said, "suffered more than I do, His Head rested on the hard wood, mine rests on a soft pillow." He was comforted with the last sacraments, which he received with signs of fervour, confidence, and joy. From time to time he repeated verses of psalms and hymns. At last, after saying clearly the verse: *Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi, in domum Domini ibimus,* and "Mary, my

Mother, my Mother, Mary," he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Maker, on the 13th day of April, 1842, at eight o'clock in the evening, being then in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

He was tall and good-looking, and was symmetrically and strongly built. In the sanctuary his manner was marked by dignity; to the poor and needy he was all tenderness and affection. His natural disposition was sanguine and fiery, but like St. Francis of Sales, he had obtained such perfect control over himself, that meekness and gentleness seemed to be rather natural than acquired virtues. His eyes, which were usually cast down, had great power of attractiveness. So too had his candid simple speech, which was at once earnest and bright, vigorous and witty. It was given to him to gain not the esteem only, but likewise the love and confidence of all who knew him.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER HIS DEATH.

"THE saint is dead." This was the cry which rang through the cities of Piedmont, but most loudly in Turin, which had been the chief field of his labours and the witness of his extraordinary virtues. His death brought sadness to thousands of hearts; while some few persons who had hitherto been unfriendly to him or prejudiced against him, now saw in him only an object of admiration and reverence. People thronged around his coffin to take a last look at his dead body, to secure some object sanctified by his usage, and to implore his intercession.

Dr. Granelli, the spiritual son and devoted friend of the venerable departed, who was with him when he gave up his soul to God, hastened to Turin, an hour before midnight, to take to Cottolengo's spiritual family at the Piccola Casa the mournful news of their loss. "God's will be done, our Father is no more." The scene which took place in the Homes cannot be described. Sisters and patients came out of their rooms to know more about their beloved Father and holy founder. Their lamentations and cries were so loud that the city watchmen who were near, hurried in to inquire the cause of

the disturbance. At length the mourners were tranquillized by Canon Anglesio, and they repaired to the church to recite the Rosary in order to obtain God's blessing on the Little House of Providence, through its founder's intercession. At Chieri his remains were honoured with a magnificent funeral. King Charles Albert, who deeply venerated the departed priest, respecting him as one of the holiest men of his kingdom, was much moved when Dr. Granelli conveyed the sad intelligence to His Majesty. "I have lost," he said, "a great friend, my best friend. Were an episcopal see vacant, I could easily find some one to fill it, but where shall I find a priest worthy to succeed Don Cottolengo?" By the royal order his remains were conveyed to Turin for interment in the Piccola Casa, which he had founded in great labour, and edified with splendid virtues.

There are two circumstances connected with this transfer and burial, which must not be overlooked. Not long before the holy man's death, a pedlar had offered to sell him some hand lanterns of a new pattern, and Sister Gabriella, with Cottolengo's consent, had purchased one. "It is well to have it," he said, "and remember to light it for the first time when, sooner or later, I happen to come in at night when it is dark." The remains of the holy man were brought to the door, early in the morning, when it was still pitch dark. The Sisters were all standing in the courtyard with wax candles in their hands, but the heavy rain and high wind had extinguished every candle-light, leaving only

the gleam of the lantern to guide those who were carrying in the precious remains.

Again, when the spot for the last resting-place had to be chosen, opinions differed. Don Anglesio, the new Superior, had selected a spot near the altar of St. Vincent de Paul. But Don Angelo Gaude and the master mason, Joseph Capasso, opposed this choice, declaring that their departed Father had selected for his place of burial a place near the shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, in a natural vault there that had been left untouched, when the altar was built. "There," he had said, "I shall rest, when I am dead; my body in this vault, my head resting at the feet of Mary's statue." And this was where he was laid.

The tomb, wherein rest his precious remains, is held in great veneration, and hither his spiritual children often come to implore his protection. This tomb recalls to their minds his eminent virtues, and thus helps to keep alive in their hearts the spirit he bequeathed them. Here they encourage themselves to follow in his footsteps, and here they thank God that they are both sheltered from the wickedness and indifference of the world, and protected against the dangers of its fascinations.

The fame of Cottolengo's sanctity spread far and wide, and God was pleased to glorify His servant by the signs and wonders which evidence the power enjoyed by the saints. Countless miracles are said to have been wrought through his intercession; by its means persons have been restored to bodily health, souls have been brought into the fold of the

one true Church, sinners have been rescued from their evil ways, hearts have been gladdened with spiritual consolations, perplexed minds have been restored to peace, families have been rescued from want and poverty, wavering religious have been strengthened in their vocation, some persons have been warned of approaching death, and others have been consoled with the visible presence of the servant of God.

In the Church Militant there are honours for God's saints as there are in the Church Triumphant. A halo of glory encircles their memory here below, while in Heaven the victor's crown and palm are theirs for all the ages of eternity. The honours of the Church Militant are even now being prepared for Joseph Benedict Cottolengo. At the request of many Bishops, of the Italian clergy, of the royal family, and of the aristocracy of Piedmont, the process of introducing the Cause of his Beatification was inaugurated at Turin, in the Little House of Providence, with all due formalities, on the 16th of January, 1863, and concluded on the 12th of March, 1873. Pope Pius IX., who had prayed for its successful termination, rejoiced at the prospect of seeing the name of Cottolengo added to the catalogue of the Church's saints, a new triumph of Christian charity.

The Decree for the introduction of the Cause of Beatification was signed by His Holiness on the 19th of July, 1877, and thus Don Joseph Benedict Cottolengo has now the title of the Venerable Servant of God.

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